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Working in the Spaces of the Taboo: Civil Society and the Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Mexico City

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Working in the Spaces of the Taboo: Civil Society and the Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Mexico City

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Abstract

Working in the Spaces of the Taboo: Civil Society and the Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Mexico City

By

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The rise of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) over the past several decades has caught the attention of activists and advocates around the world. Their work has contributed to a host of policies, initiatives, and legal doctrine that continues to shape public discussions of the issue as well policy responses to the problem at the international, national, and local level. According to a number of international monitoring organizations, Mexico stands as the prime destination for trafficked children and the country in the Western Hemisphere with the highest degree of CSEC. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted over the summer of 2010 in Mexico City, I explore the relationship between the work of civil society advocates campaigning against CSEC and the struggles, successes, and issues they face working in the context of Mexico City. My findings reveal important developments in the work of advocates as well as the revelation of critical areas in their work that deserve further investigation and research. At the same time, my research gives some insight into the way advocacy groups carry

out their agendas in the face of a weak Mexican state, intensifying violence related to escalated war on drugs, and the inherent difficulties associated with working at the level of civil society.

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Introduction

Why Civil Society in Mexico?

In both "developed" and "developing" nations, millions of people depend on civil society actors (that is, non-state actors) for basic services, security and law enforcement, employment, and as a check against often abusive and reckless states. Much has been written on civil society in various national and international contexts, yet it remains a piece of the puzzle routinely neglected when looking at commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Much of this has to do with the relatively strong emergence of civil society in the past 30 years, a phenomenon associated with the expansion of neoliberal and global capitalist policies which restructured government institutions by reducing the size of state institutions and limiting the state's intervention in its own social and economic wellbeing---thereby replacing its role with the "free market." In the developing world, the devastating effects these policies had on vulnerable populations created a demand to organize and create social support institutions that took the role of providing services and support the state had previously provided, yet operating outside the juridical authority of the state. For most authors, civil society is defined as the political, social, and cultural organizations within society that extend outside both the state and the private sector. Its emergence as a prominent sector of society represents not simply reduction of state institutions during the expansion of capitalism in the 1980s and 1990s, but simultaneously represents a push by the now called "Global North" for a more engaged, internationally, minded citizenry. In other words, although civil society organizations perform important roles in developed as well as developing nations, in countries with underdeveloped democracies and weak states, non-governmental actors play an important role in fostering human rights and

holding state agencies accountable for insuring basic social rights. Where legislative and judicial systems are unable or unwilling to address issues such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, an important role of non-governmental actors is to draw attention to the failures of governmental institutions and bring public scrutiny to bear to bring about change (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Civil society employs millions of people as well and as an industry, has created a new class of professionals working outside the state and private sector to work in organizations that are more often than not, aimed at making a difference in society. Of course, no two civil society organizations are alike. Civil society is composed of conservative and liberal organizations, religious and secular, and just about any ideological affiliation one can imagine. Ultimately, civil society has become an important force in all nations around the world and so the need for its inclusion in any social structural analysis serves as the overarching theme throughout this project. The thesis examines the ways in which civil society has been relevant in putting the spotlight on one issue in particular: the sexual exploitation of children. My aim is to study those in civil society confronting a radically pernicious and terrible problem in the face of obstacles inherent to civil society organization, as well as those issues related to working in the unique context of Mexico City—the state, the general public, and the numerous social, economic, and political problems that run concurrent and are related to CSEC.

CSEC is an issue civil society has become heavily involved in, in both Western and Westernized nations. In the 1990s, the work of organizations like End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT), became instrumental in making the world aware of the problem of CSEC. Initially, through ECPAT's work in Southeast Asia and over time, through a global engagement with CSEC that resulted in the organization establishing offices in countries throughout the globe and spearheading many important regional

and domestic efforts to combat CSEC. Concurrently, ECPAT's work during the 1990s led to important international conferences against trafficking and exploitation of children, inspired thousands around the world to organize against this issue in their own countries, and facilitated fundamental changes in domestic laws such as the Protection for Victims of Trafficking Act in the United States and the Council of Europe's Convention Against the Trafficking of Human Beings. To this day, civil society's efforts in the developing world (where CSEC remains more rampant) are crucial to preventing CSEC and addressing the needs of victims who have undergone exploitation.

Mexico is certainly no exception to this rule. Civil society's work in the Distrito Federal or la Ciudad de México (the capital of the country known in English as "Mexico City") as well as at the border region, the tourist zones, and other important metropolitan centers of the country act as the first, and some might say only, line of defense against CSEC. These organizations struggle daily against a national context that is in constant battle with state corruption, powerful organized crime, and a debilitating social and economic infrastructure that leaves millions vulnerable and insecure. This, along with contrasting patterns of migration to the United States, unprecedented urbanization, and growing domestic drug addiction have created a social context in which fighting CSEC, as well as other problems, is a difficult, yet imperative task. In the wake of vast reductions in state services, expanded privatization of once nationalized industries, and a host of other economic and political policies thematically dubbed "neoliberal," civil society has grown to fill the vast social gaps created by these policies.

Thus, this project offers a critical examination of the relationship between the transformed social and economic context of Mexico and the way these emerging transformations

have played out politically within the work of those in civil society concerned with preventing and ending CSEC.

My decision to examine this issue stems from the following. First, CSEC remains a poorly understood problem in Mexico. Aside from attempts at the international and domestic level to acquire a quantitative and qualitative understanding of the problem, few have written and studied the issue (Azaola, 2000; Long 2004). At the level of the state, there are several reasons why this is the case, yet within academia, the gap in our knowledge about CSEC represents an important place where research is needed. Second, of what has been written on CSEC in Mexico, there is little empirical research examining the role of civil society in this matter. Most research has been concerned with the problem itself at the expense of downplaying, or even failing to mention, the crucial role of civil society in addressing this issue in Mexico. And third, because of civil society's unique kind of engagement with this issue, they offer a valuable perspective on the problem. Not only does civil society play a crucial role in combating and preventing CSEC, but because of a negligent Mexican state, they continue to play the most important role with regards to this issue.

Theoretical Framework

I situate my research at the intersection of a number of theoretical frameworks which inform my approach, my method, and my analytical understanding of the information I received in interviews and through research. In conjuring a notion of civil society, I look to those scholars whose work traces the development of civil society in Latin America to the economic and political transformations, which took place in the region during the 1980s and 1990s. Through historical, anthropological, sociological, and economic investigations of the effect of neoliberal

policy in the region, their work offers a theoretical narrative for the rise of civil society in the context of Latin America. According to this line of thinking, civil society's growth was the result of the needs that emerged as drastic cuts to state social and economic programs made life harder for vulnerable groups (Fischer, 2009; Guarneros-Meza and Geddes, 2010). In combination with concurrent efforts to end dictatorial and "clientelist" regimes in Latin America, increase respect for human rights, address the rise of organized crime and violence, and give notice to the unique rights of women, indigenous groups, and Afro-descendent groups, civil society became a vehicle to address particular deficiencies with the state while attempting to meet the needs of varied, local constituencies.

At the same time, actors in the developed world played an instrumental role in the shaping of civil society in Latin America. This occurred through the substantial financial support given by donors in the developed world, but also in the structural development of the international non-government organizations (NGOs) that were created during the 1980s and 1990s. I situate this dynamic into the theoretical framework of my research as I analyze the structural cartography of organizing within civil society in the developing world, and specifically in Mexico City. While I narrowed my research subjects to those organizations that were developed within Mexico and started by Mexicans, it became clear in conversations that in each organization, there were strong ties to international NGOs, international government organizations (IGOs), foreign governments, and private foundations based in the developed world. Following the theorizations of other scholars, I enter into and analyze my research from the perspective that such interactions contour the kinds of conversations, policies, and legal prescriptions that emerge both from civil society and the state. However, rather than take the view that these interactions are controlled entirely by those from the developing world, I posit

that at least within the context of combating CSEC in Mexico City, interactions between local civil society and international actors go back and forth, each side responding to the other's push onto the system as changes in policy and context arise. While I cite obvious limitations in the system for local actors, I argue against the perspective that the interactions are one sided, preferring instead to highlight how local civil society actors play significant, complex, and nuanced roles in the shaping and development of policy aimed at eradicating CSEC.

Concurrently, this research project is informed by the work of scholars theorizing on the phenomenon of commercialized sexual exploitation against children in the developing world. While the historical evidence reveals a deep, cross-cultural tradition of exploiting children for sexual purposes, many scholars note the unique manifestations of this phenomenon in the contemporary era. This includes investigations on the rise of sex tourism in the developing world, the growth of trafficking of minors for sexual purposes, and the presence and global exchange of child pornography (ECPAT, 2008; U.S. Dept. of State, 2009). These instances of CSEC, for scholars, denote dramatic shifts in the kind of commercialized sexual exploitation cited by historians and anthropologists. For one, it represents a globalization of exploitation and an expansion of previously localized networks. Additionally, new forms of CSEC, such as child pornography, illustrate the role technology now plays in the systems of exploitation at work.

In light of these shifts in the practice of CSEC, authors are also quick to point to the regional and global patriarchal systems at work that result in CSEC being a problem primarily experienced by girls and at the hands of usually male exploiters. This line of thinking argues that similar to other instance of sexual violence, CSEC operates within a male dominated system in which female sexuality is seen as an object, and thereby property, of males (Long, 2004; O'Connell-Davidson, 2005; Gould, 2010). Contemporary instances of globalized prostitution and

sexual exploitation are embedded within a longer history of male control over the female body. Today, these systems not only rely on the resource and income inequality between men and women, but on traditional and contemporary cultural logics that frame the female body as a commodity to be bought and sold. These scholars, therefore argue, that CSEC cannot be understood solely as a crime and punishment issues, but instead as a perverse result of the confluence between present-day market capitalism and the continued tradition of patriarchy (Long, 2004; O'Connell-Davidson, 2005; Gould, 2010).

Finally, I situate this research within the set of theories that demand a discursive examination of the policy outcomes that have resulted from the global campaign against anti-trafficking. Following the work of these scholars, anti-trafficking policy itself must be understood within a political context in which the paths taken by states, NGOs, and community organizations reflect particular understandings of the problem (Long, 2004). Based on this view, trafficking is not only a pernicious crime that exists in the world, but is also a problem that has become constructed by those organizing against it. These scholars point to the arbitrary distinctions between trafficking of minors and adults, the international focus on sex trafficking at the expense of attention being paid to labor trafficking, and the implications these distinctions have for long term eradication of trafficking (Gould, 2010; O'Connell-Davidson, 2005). The contradictions exposed within the laws aimed to prevent trafficking, in the policy conceived at the national and international level, and the public understanding and portrayal of trafficking have the effect of producing public narratives on trafficking that have pernicious implications and demand careful rethinking among anti-trafficking advocates. Following this framework, anti-trafficking policy must be thought of within the inequalities that surround the issue and entails

the inclusion of the experiences of victims and practitioners when constructing policy (Long, 2004; Gould, 2010; O'Connell-Davidson, 2005).

In several parts of this work, I attempt to flesh out the discursive and ideological contradictions in anti-trafficking advocacy in Mexico City. In doing so, I borrow from the insights of my informants (who seem most keenly aware of the implications of the contradictions they confront in their work), anti-trafficking scholars, and theorists examining the role of ideology in contemporary society. As I move along in this research, my aim is to provide a cohesive understanding of anti-CSEC advocacy in Mexico City, yet in doing so I will move between the theoretical frameworks outlined here. This is because while I enter and frame my conceptualization of the issues I confront within already existing scholarship, the experience of my informants plays the dominant role in helping to structure the issues I choose to tease out in this work. In this way, the theoretical exercise expressed in this thesis is "grounded" within the actual experiences of those I spoke with while in Mexico City. This not only implies a level of practicality to the research, but more importantly demands theoretical flexibility as the goal is not to necessarily pin down the issues at play into a neat and orderly conceptual box, but rather to allow such issues to remain open as contexts shift and situations change.

Methods and Reasoning

This project is the result of three months of fieldwork in Mexico City in which I had the opportunity to meet with and interview professional women and men representing several of the key organizations working against CSEC in Mexico City. In my research, I concentrated on the institutions that began through organizing efforts at the local level, and so I excluded from the research several international organizations operating in Mexico City that also deal with CSEC.

That said, my conversations with the professionals at the organizations I established contact with revealed a small and connected domestic community representing the majority of organizations actively engaged against CSEC in the capital. I spoke with adult women and men working at six organizations in my fieldwork, which altogether constituted all the domestic organizations working against CSEC in Mexico City and 75% of all organizations working against CSEC in Mexico.

The objective for my research project was to study how local organizations based in Mexico City understood and confronted CSEC. This entailed meeting with and interviewing members of organizations to explore answers to specific research questions. What is the history of each one these organizations? How is each one of them structured? And why? What are the professional goals of these women and men, especially with regard to CSEC? What is their relationship to other organizations and institutions, and their perspective on the problem of CSEC? As I explored answers to these questions with these professionals, it implied asking organization leaders what they saw as imperative to fighting CSEC, the needs of their organization, and the problems they saw as hindering their efforts in effectively combating CSEC.

The process of identifying the organizations and finding a time to meet with them was a slow moving snowball process. I initially began contacting organizations through their online contact information, and with the help of a fellow researcher in Mexico City, I was able to gain contact more effectively through acquiring office numbers and personal email information. This eventually led to one interview, which led to receiving contact information for another organization, which led to an interview and contact information for a new organization. While less conventional that establishing formal meetings with secretaries or administrative assistants,

sending my research description to personal emails and calling people through their cell phone rather than office phone, led to quick, positive, and enthusiastic replies by my informants.

After IRB approval by the University of Texas at Austin, I conducted my ethnographic work in Mexico City during the summer of 2010. I personally conducted the interviews in Spanish and then I later transcribed and translated them. I am fluent in Spanish. I followed all confidentiality procedures with the interviews and have only included the names of the organizations I spoke with. Each organizational member I spoke with granted me permission to include the information collected during our individual interviews for purposes of this research project. I received their permission to include the actual title and the name of the organization they worked for or represented. The subjects were informed of the confidentiality of the study and their rights as participants before the interview and their acknowledgement and permission to conduct the interview was granted orally and recorded.

I made the decision here to solely include their title in the organization and create a coded name for the organization. I do this for specific reasons. First, although I am aware my informants may filter a given organization view, the aim of the study is to acquire an organizational perspective, not the perspective of individuals working in civil society. While a difficult line to toe, my focus was for an account of how the organization operates, the discourse it uses and works with, and the way it negotiates the many difficulties inherent to civil society work in Mexico. Though it might be argued individual perspective can influence the meaning behind this kind of work, especially in an interview setting, with good faith I made sure to reiterate my focus on the organization and the professional perspective of my informant, not their personal perspective. Second, I refer to my informants by title rather than name here so as to highlight their organizational perspective. For instance, a director's understanding of a problem

might be different from a program coordinator, to a legal director, to a secretary. Noting title, rather than name, for me highlights the *positionality* of the informant in question, denoting their particular stake in the organization as well as their stated and implied responsibilities. Finally, the decision to use title instead of actual name (or pseudonym) is with the purpose to inform the reader of the level of professionalism inherent to those civil society organizations working against CSEC in Mexico City. The people I interviewed were college educated, bilingual (and at times multilingual), and professional in demeanor and their interactions with me. Referring to them by their title denotes the class and educational status of these women and men, and thus subtly suggests the difference between the organizations I spoke with and say something like a labor union, or radical political organization. That said, I made the decision to hide the name of the organization as a way to protect my informants from being identified through their title.

Of the representatives I spoke with, three were women and three were men. Of the three women, two could be described as director or head of the organization while the other woman was a project coordinator. Of the men I spoke with, one could be described as the director of the organization while the other two were lawyers and served as the legal directors of the organizations they worked for. All of the representatives possessed a formal degree in law and substantial education in international law—especially as it related to CSEC. One female representative also had a degree in psychology. While age was not asked, those I spoke with seemed to be anywhere from their early 30s to early 50s. In terms of racial composition, everyone I spoke with could be described racially (i.e., phenotypically) as *blanca*, *blanco,* or *mestizo,* or of being mixed race with European and North American indigenous ancestry. While race was in the back of my mind during the interview process, I did not ask participants to identify themselves racially and so while none of the participants outwardly appeared to be of

primarily indigenous, Afro, or Asian descent, they might identify and share strong ties to one or more of these racial groups.

Interviews ranged from an hour to nearly two hours. The questions covered focused on the organization's origin and structure, their perspective on CSEC, their specific work or projects, their funding and support, their limitations and successes, and the challenges they faced and foresaw. These topic areas often branched out into deeper conversations on these issues that touched on political and social topics, other organizations, and particular dynamics unique to working at the level of civil society. While the questions helped to direct the interviews, they were often used a guideline for an open discussion. The discussions were friendly and amicable, and those participating in the interviews came across as happy to help and enthusiastic to express the point of view of their organization. Most interviews were held in the office of the organization, though two were conducted at cafes at the request of the informants. Appendix A includes the interview guide I used as I engaged in these conversations.

It is worth mentioning here my own positionality as a factor in the method and reasoning that I take. As a concept, positionality refers to the social identity one carries with them in their public performances of selfhood. In this writing or in the interviews I conducted, pieces of me related to my political disposition, class status, national origin, and other subjectivities become crucial in the production of my academic work. These factors inherently shape the nature of my discussions, my thoughts, and my words, yet they are also accentuated and revealed through context. As a white, Peruvian-American in Mexico City, it was without a doubt the case that some parts of my identity were more influential than others. As a well educated, white, heterosexual, male academic, from the United States, my access to the offices and attention of the people I spoke with might be read as the result of the privilege with which I was read---

perhaps a benefit unavailable to someone undertaking the same project with an identity historically marginalized in academic spaces (women, queer, person of color, among others). At the same time, I met with people whose positionality placed them at the center of Mexican society—high economic-social status, mostly blanca or blanco (non-indigenous) mainly blanqui-mestizas and blanqui-mestizos, and well-educated individuals. It might be said that the privilege I carried with me allowed me to gain access, but its effects on the power within the conversation are less certain. Perhaps the respective identities resonated with one another, rather than competed for space and power. The friendliness and level of rapport I felt at the end of each interview seems to suggest this might have been the case. At the same time, my identity as a Latino-American, my conformability with Latin American cultures, and my grasp of Spanish might have made me easier to relate to than someone without a Latino or Latin American background. Any attempt at knowing either way is speculative, yet important to think about.

In analyzing the findings of research, I do my best to "ground" my results in a theoretical framework that does not attempt to impose, but rather attempts to make certain through the serious treatment of the perspectives received. In this work, I do my best to move in this direction, keeping in mind the perspectives I received from those I interviewed. That said, I find good reason to situate my findings within already active theoretical perspectives that have tried to make sense of the social, economic, and, political perspectives of Mexico. Thus, I am keen to structural analyses that attempt to address the implications of neoliberal policy in Mexico over the past 20 years. At the same time, the literature on NGOs and civil society in both Latin America and internationally have been instrumental in untangling the contradictions and unique insights of those interviewed. Finally, writing on CSEC in the international context as well as Mexican context have helped me to understand the problem better as well as borrow from the

literature the kinds of critical questions and theoretical perspectives that are most useful for thinking through the problem.

Finally, at the time of my fieldwork in the summer of 2010, I conducted my research in the midst of violence both in Mexico City and the rest of the country. The backdrop of an escalated military conflict between the Mexican state and various drug cartels throughout Mexico illustrated the extent to which organized crime penetrated the psyche of Mexican society. While I never witnessed any instances of violence during my stay, the looming threat of violence structured my personal comportment while conducting fieldwork and became a center piece in the conversations I carried out with my informants. As human trafficking and sexual exploitation are parts of a host of illicit enterprises undertaken by cartels, it was impossible not to see the connections between the violence that plagued Mexico and my own research on the efforts to stop CSEC. Conversations with organization leaders brought this point home further as a central concern of theirs returned to instilling the rule of law in Mexico and finding ways to dismantle organized criminal networks. While the scope of my research objective combined with the limitations of the IRB excluded a full exploration of the relationship between violence and anti-CSEC advocacy, it is mentioned in several parts of this work as its presence in Mexican society has steadily moved from the background to the fore.

Organization

I organize the thesis into three chapters each meant to highlight some of the concerns of my interview questions as well as some of the important insights I received from organizations. In the first chapter, I provide a simple outline of the organizations as well as a description of their particular role within the neoliberal context. In this section I discuss my special interest in

addressing the need to appreciate the position of civil society within neoliberalism, while also analyzing the limitations and possibilities of this new contextual space. At the same time, I use the perspective of the organizations I spoke with to address several common limitations and successes relayed to me in interviews. In doing so, I feel the reader will have a stronger grasp of the structural operation of the organizations as well as a thorough perspective on the contradictory formations of power within institutions that are vulnerable to the neoliberal era's particular shaping of civil society.

In the second chapter, I look at the discursive and ideological force of civil society. In painting this picture, I borrow from European philosopher Slavoj Zizek's concept of the *unknown known*—the ideological leaps of faith made when the present facts are unclear. Addressing the arguments made by O'Connell Davidson, Bernstein, and others, that the quantitative research on CSEC is speculative at best, and misleading at worse, I make the case that for civil society actors in Mexico, keeping intact the belief that CSEC is a growing and increasingly pernicious problem is an important first step in mobilizing public support on the issue. The dangers discussed by these authors regarding the effects of operating under poor information, however, lack an organizational perspective that my research offers. It is here where I suggest how the absence of reliable information on the quantitative and qualitative attributes of CSEC in Mexico might serve productive or strategic ends for organizations operating in that context. My research suggests that the effect of controlling the popular discourse on the issue of CSEC, even if that discourse is not based in fact, can be an effective tactic which organizations have actively taken up. I use this experience to address how this might in fact offer us a more nuanced understanding of how information and information control play into global discourses regarding anti-sexual exploitation advocacy.

Finally, in the last chapter of this thesis I look at the future of organizing against CSEC in Mexico through a discussion of the origin and development of the organizations I spoke with. In constructing this picture, I first start with an outline of the international and domestic context that kick started the campaign against CSEC, focusing specifically on the international legal roots of anti-CSEC work. Concurrently, I use this history to highlight role of politics in mobilizing the global campaign against CSEC and the influence international law and international organizations played on the development of the domestic organizations I spoke with while in Mexico. In concluding, I discuss the work of one organization I feel represents a transformation taking place in Mexico regarding the way CSEC is conceived as problem and policy issue. I believe the work of this organization carries the potential to have a powerful impact on the future of international and domestic understandings of CSEC---one that moves from focusing on the specific exploitation of children to a broader campaign against ending the systems that reproduce exploitative relationships people.

Finally, I offer my final reflections to conclude and restate the points studied in the previous chapters. I do my best to paint a global picture of the role of Mexican civil society in CSEC advocacy and extend some of my implications into a more workable analysis of the issues at play.

Chapter 1

The Limitations and Successes of Civil Society Fighting Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Mexico: A Review

Introduction

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) remains a critical issue in many parts of the world. According to international monitoring organizations, CSEC is a multibillion dollar business with presence in just about every part of the globe (US Dept. of State, 2007; ECPAT, 2009; UNICEF, 2000). In the Americas, the problem has become especially severe over the past decade and a half. Countries such as Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and of course, Mexico, have struggled and organized against the persistence and growth of the problem. Much of the present attention to CSEC globally can be attributed to advocacy and vigilance campaigns begun by European founded and based NGOs working in Southeast Asia, such as End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (EPCAT), which eventually resulted in global monitoring campaigns supported by states, international governance organizations (such as the International Labour Organization), and networks of NGOs**.** The expansion of these organizations into Latin America occurred over the past 15 years, with many currently based and operating in Mexico City. ECPAT, for instance, has an office in Mexico City, while other larger human rights and children's rights groups such as Save the Children or Amnesty International currently devote significant attention to anti-CSEC advocacy and reporting.

In Mexico, attempts to raise awareness of CSEC started as early as the mid 1990s, when NGOs, the United Nations, and the United States began focusing attention to the problem of

trafficking (US Dept. of State, 2008). Following similarly designed networks for trafficking of drugs and arms, Mexico has developed as a transit point for people smuggling from all over the world (US Dept. of State, 2009). From the trafficking of young girls from Central America into Southern Mexico and the Yucatán, to the uncovering of cases in which women from Africa and Central Europe have been found captive in Cancún and other tourist destinations, Mexico stands as one of the central points for the sexual exploitation in the world. In addition, the country's size, proximity to the Unites States, and development of tourism over the last two decades, have allowed some to rank Mexico as having the worst CSEC problem in the Western Hemisphere (ECPAT, 2009).

Mexico's response to the presence and persistence of CSEC remains weak, due in part to the slow development of reforms at the federal level as well as the poor enforcement of existing laws against CSEC. According to a report by the U.S. State Department only a handful of individuals arrested for sexually exploiting children have been successfully prosecuted, despite the large presence of the problem in Mexico (2009). Yet, while enforcement has been a concern, researchers on this issue continue to believe the persistence of CSEC is in large part due to the absence of economic opportunities for both the exploiter and the exploited (Azaola, 2000). In my own interviews with NGO leaders, this argument seemed supported by their own experience working with both exploiters and exploited children. Though not the only reason identified for participation in CSEC, it continued to be cited by the advocates I spoke with as an underlying structural condition for the large presence of CSEC in Mexico.

Indeed, among activists both working in Mexico and globally on the problem of CSEC, the structural argument has become a more popular way to understand how CSEC works and the shortcomings of enforcement based solutions to the problems. Following the works of O'Connell

Davidson, Waqcuant, and Gould, the "Catch a Predator" culture, in which increased vigilance has yet to produce strong payoffs in terms of incidence reduction (especially in the developing world) are the result of a discursive investment in the problem of trafficking that can be traced to larger policies designed to regulate the lives of the poor or the bodies of women (O'Connell Davidson, 2005; Wacquant, 2009; Gould, 2010). In response to these critiques, activists and policy makers are attempting to find lasting solutions to CSEC such as increased educational opportunities, economic reform, and community development. In Mexico, my interviews with activists and advocates reveal that organizations are beginning to incorporate prevention into the goals and practices of organizations working against CSEC.

Some scholars connect the economic changes brought about by neoliberal reform in the 1980s and 1990s to the problems occurring today (Long 2004). While a mountain of writing exists on the varied perspectives surrounding both the definition and political consequences of neoliberalism, for the purposes of this project, I use the concept of neoliberalism to describe the economic and social reforms put in place in Mexico during the 1980s and 1990s that encouraged economic privatization and free trade policies. As it relates to CSEC, these reforms resulted in market instability, urbanization, international migration, growth of tourism, and a dramatic reduction of state services; are viewed as related to the growth of underground economies and social networks that contribute to CSEC (Long, 2004; Aronowitz, 2001). Yet, while economic instability on its own might be a precipitating cause of CSEC, analysis has yet to illustrate the ways in which the specific components of neoliberal economic instability in their own right create unique settings that foster the persistence and growth of CSEC. Put differently, research has yet to investigate whether the effects of neoliberalism that have been identified as unique to neoliberalism, are in any way connected to alleged rise and growth of CSEC in Mexico. Instead,

the focus among researchers has been to demonstrate the unique ways in which neoliberalism impoverishes many, concentrates wealth, and destabilizes the economy, arguably two attributes not uniquely connected to neoliberal economics, nor necessarily an inherent result of neoliberal economic policy (as Chile's economic performance illustrates) (Hanson, 2007).

In one trajectory of analysis regarding neoliberalism, the diminishing presence of the state is perceived to be accompanied, or replaced, by the presence of both local and global NGOs (Malhotra, 2000; Smillie, 1994; Cabanas, D. et al., 2001). In Latin America, authors from across disciplines have documented the growing presence of NGOs within the social fabric, addressing problems such as education, healthcare, human rights, and trade (Alvarez, 1999; Meyer, 1999). The concept of the NGO is relatively new in Mexico and in Latin America, and is connected to the pattern of organizing that emerged out of international movements from the global north becoming connected to civil society in the global south. Indeed, Mexico has a rich history of social organizing for political, social, cultural, and economic causes, yet the organizational distinction between this tradition of organizing and the NGO reflect a new kind of organizing pattern emerging for select issues undertaken by Mexican advocates. Following a line of funding normally beginning in what is now known as "the Global North" and moving to "the Global South," some have argued that what is truly characteristic of the neoliberal condition is the simultaneous growth of international corporations, trade and charity institutions (Zizek, 2008; Hale, 1997; Speed, 2007; Minkoff, 1997). Some have sinisterly characterized this reality as one in which civil society assumes the basic tasks of providing for the social welfare of society within a system in which market forces remain tied to the unpredictable whim of globalization—the result being a system in which social and economic entitlements are uncertain and supported privately.

In analyzing the neoliberal condition, researchers have certainly not taken this point for granted. In fact, different perspectives have emerged. Many are quick to criticize the present system for its lack of public accountability, especially as it pertains to the state (Teichman, 2009). In more extreme settings, some have characterized the growth of NGOs globally as a new form of colonialism, at least insomuch as NGOs represent a reinforcement of the systems of control that prevents developmental autonomy among those in the developing world (Pearce, 2010). Others have weighed in with more ambivalent conclusions, using case studies in various contexts to illustrate the ways in which NGOs have successfully addressed issues, coordinated with the state, contributed to community development, decreased international dependency, or advanced their agenda within the slippery political and economic context of neoliberalism (Gordenker et al, 1995; Tvert, 2002; Alvarez, 1999).

Here, I focus on developing the context within which NGOs operate, noting the unique conditions posed by working within a neoliberal Mexico. I then spend time focusing on the limitation and successes NGOs have made in Mexico combating CSEC within the neoliberal epoch. Showcasing the perspectives of NGOs, I believe, has the potential to offer us a better understanding and appreciation of the contextual field in which organizations operate. At the same time, I see it as useful for gauging the future direction of NGOs in Mexico—a point I concern myself with later in this work.

Section 1: CSEC in Mexico in the Age of Neoliberalism

For most scholars of neoliberalism in Mexico, the process can be described as the economic restructuring that occurred in beginning of the 1980s due to economic stagflation brought on by a drop in commodity prices and a failure on the part of Mexico to pay off its

foreign debt (Ramirez, 2000). The result was a series of negotiations between the International Monetary Fund and Mexico, in which Mexico was required to restructure its political and economic system in order receive emergency loans that would stabilize its banking system. These requirements led a privatization of parts of the Mexican economy, the creation of free trade export and import zones, a reduction in state services and subsidies, easements on the entry of foreign capital and investment in Mexico, and eventually paved the way for the North American Free Trade Agreement, a free trade treaty between the United States, Canada, and Mexico which became into effect in January 1, 1994 and that eliminated import and export tariffs on commodities (Cooney, 2001). In the wake of these dramatic changes to the economy, researchers and policy makers alike have noted central changes to the Mexican political and social landscape. These include the opening up of political spaces for new political parties and movements, the enormous immigration of Mexicans into the United States and elsewhere, the growth of the informal economy, the reduction of real wages, the growth of crime, and the overall decrease in economic and social opportunities for Mexico's poorest citizens (Donald, 1975; Pastor and Wise, 1997; ILO, 2003; Ramirez, 2000).

In the last decade and a half this has given rise to an influx of NGOs in Mexico designed to respond to the slew of social problems neoliberalism has caused. One of these problems is CSEC, which has been attributed to the reduction in economic and education opportunities for children in Mexico (UNICEF, 2000). At the same time, the breakdown of Mexican families in rural areas due to immigration or urbanization has further intensified the problem by leaving children vulnerable to abuse when one parent is away and the other must work to make ends meet (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2006). Additionally, neoliberalism has been connected to the rise child homelessness in Mexico as well as the presence of drugs within Mexican society (Spring,

2009; UNICEF, 2007). In conversations with the professionals at organizations that attend to victims, both the condition of homelessness and the presence of readily available drugs are identified as the kinds of spaces in which children find themselves vulnerable to abuse.

Further, neoliberal changes within the Mexican economy have opened up Mexico to new international trade, and in turn, new forms of international smuggling (Bailey, 2010). Drugs, weapons, and people move through Mexico from all over the world, in part the result of developed infrastructure in the country, closer and more developed trade with the United States, and the changes within the drug trade brought on by similar strategies in other parts of Latin America (Bailey, 2010). In addition, reduced air travel combined with an explosion of foreign investment in Mexico has resulted in businessmen from the around the world either taking new residence in Mexico or frequenting the country on a regular basis. Similar to the movement of militaries, this has resulted in the growth of prostitution in Mexico's business centers, with an especially dramatic growth reported in Mexico City (Rusch et al, 2010). Finally, tourism in Mexico has seen an exponential level of growth following the neoliberal changes begun in the 1980s. Beach destination sites from around the country have found themselves catering to the sexual appetites of tourists, in turn resulting in an underground economy in which children are trafficked and offered to clients from around the world (Petit, 2004). Without growth in direct foreign investment, offset by the deregulation of the Mexican economy and the accessibility of land once securely held by Mexican farmers, such growth would not possible. In all of these ways, the growth of prostitution, pornography, and trafficking of children has grown, in many ways mirroring the steady development of neoliberal economic initiatives. Particularly interesting to this same process is the growth of NGOs in Mexico both responding to the problems neoliberalism has created, but specifically providing services and advocacy for

children. These groups have emerged through activism by groups in other parts of the world, but also by the vigilance of social activists in Mexico disturbed by the growth of CSEC. Their work constitutes both an important result, and an important turn, in the way CSEC is thought of and dealt with as a social problem. As I illustrate in the next section, these groups ride along the ever present contradictions inherent to NGO work within neoliberal society, managing those contradictions in interesting and strategic ways.

Section 2: Fighting the Good Fight: A Review of the Organizations, Successes and Limitations

Based on my interviews, I identified key areas in which ideologies and practices inspired by neoliberalism shape and determine the strategies organizations pursue, the challenges they face, and the spaces that have opened up. Those include relationships with the state, access to funding, and national and international networking. It is important to mention here, however, how the present efforts to organize on behalf of preventing and eliminating CSEC in Mexico have for the most part taken place within the past decade and a half and during what some might describe as the neoliberal era for Mexico. Noting this, I want to stress how the research prevented here is not an attempt to compare the neoliberal era to another time in which organizing might have taken place, such an exercise is impossible. I instead, want my findings to complement more general theories, concepts, and realities that have characterized the larger neoliberal context. In doing so, my goal here is to highlight the advocacy strategies of organizations fighting against sexual violence within the present system, narrowing my interest to those concerns identified by those actively resisting a certain aspect of sexual violence—namely CSEC.

As noted in the introduction, I was able to speak with six organizations that work to understand and eradicate CSEC in Mexico. These include the following: Comunidades Unidas, Arcoiris de Esperanza, ¡Protección Ahora!, Protegiendo la Niñez, Casa de Luz, and Red Contra la Explotación. Based on their work, the organizations could be divided into three categories: Organizations working solely at prevention (Comunidades Unidas, ¡Protección Ahora!, and Red Contra la Explotación), organizations solely attending to victims (Protegiendo la Niñez) and organizations that worked on both (Arcoiris de Esperanza and Casa de Luz). Within these larger thematic elements, organizations might work on an assortment of issues. Those dealing with prevention described education initiatives in towns, neighborhoods, and communities where exploitation of children was common, working on legal reform with politicians and policy makers, working alongside the police and the judicial system, serving as support for anti-drug programs, and other creative projects aimed at reducing the number of exploited and those who exploit. Those attending to victims worked at a smaller level, caring for and providing victims with medical services, shelter, legal services, and basic necessities such as clean clothes, food, and comfortable place to sleep. In addition, their work was about care and development, helping victims of sexual violence reintegrate into society and create positive outcomes from devastating circumstances.

The kind of work an organization performed represented to a large degree their size. Organizations able to attend to victims (or both, offering attention to victims and working on prevention) were much larger than the organizations working solely at prevention. This was because those that attend to victims generally had a large staff of caretakers, social workers, and psychologists, as well as a large office and housing complex where they offer their services. Prevention based organizations worked out of smaller offices with a small staff (5 to 6

employees), while Arcoiris de Esperanza, the largest organization I spoke with, reported to have a staff of over 100 people. The difference in size was both connected to the kind of work organizations performed as well as the kind of funding they were able to access.

Funding available for prevention work was less common than money to treat and attend to victims. For example, in my interviews with Protegiendo la Niñez and Casa de Luz, I was told they received money from the Mexican state to care for the children that came under their guardianship. Though reportedly not a lot of money, it did represent a significant difference to the prevention-based organizations I visited. At the same time, "selling" the problem of CSEC to potential private donors seemed like an easier task if an organization attended to victims. It made it possible to illustrate for donors the immediate and material effects of their work, rather than to sell a plan at prevention—something with only speculative success.

Differences like this kept intact the level of competition organizations had to undergo in order to acquire and receive resources from international funding organizations. For some of the professionals I talked to, this was part of the process of acquiring funds, while for others it elicited a kind of resentment at the never-ending quest to sell one's organization and acquire grants. The reliance on external funding seemed unsustainable, and as I interviewed organizations in the midst of a global recession, it was clear that money was on their minds. A director put it bluntly,

> Now, there is not a lot of money from foundations or international organizations. Only USAID is supporting most of the organizations that work against trafficking[1].

Of course implying that certain compromises must be made before one willingly takes money from the United States.

[1] Original text in Spanish: "Ahora, no hay mucho dinero de fundaciones o de organizaciones internacionales. Sólo el USAID está apoyando muchas de las organizaciones que trabajan contra la trata."

Despite the fieldwork of this project only examined Mexico City, the organizations I interviewed comprised most of the organization doing work against CSEC in the country. With the exception of a few organizations working in the north of the country and one particularly famous one working in Cancún direct attention to the problem of CSEC is principally happening in Mexico City. Some of the reasons responsible for this pattern include the following. First, Mexico's centralized social, political, and economic structure makes it more advantageous for organizations to work in the capital. Organization leaders described the importance of being in touch with government officials, state offices, and foreign dignitaries as one of the many advantages of doing work in Mexico City.

At the same time, like many other Latin American capitals, Mexico City is the economic, political, social, and cultural centre of the country. Currently 10 percent of the country's population resides within its city limits, while another 10 percent live in its surrounding neighbourhoods. Mexico City and its surrounding areas account for 34 percent of the total gross domestic product for Mexico and in global comparisons the *Distrito Federal* is the eighth richest city in the world (Hawksworth et al, 2009). For Rubin, Mexico City's centrality in Mexican life must be contrasted against the regional centres of power that exist in the country. Following this argument, power and politics are exchanged along a continuum in which the national policy is transfigured to fit the needs of the region, and in these process, new political forms emerge that make their way back to the centre (Rubin, 1996). While I do not address the regional organizations dealing with CSEC in Mexico, Rubin's analysis is important for thinking about some of the ways in which civil society similarly organizes itself. As groups imagined their advocacy as part of a larger international movement, it was easy to see how the issues faced at the regional level came to inform global discourses and debates in CSEC. The exchange between

regional and global actors suggests a fluidity of power between those at the supposed "centre" and those working in the periphery---a relationship instrumental to effectively understanding a problem as complex as CSEC.

And second, the capital is presumably a microcosm for the larger problems of CSEC taking place inside the country. Every organization I spoke with clued me into the many ways in which CSEC in Mexico City takes place on a daily basis. From the prostitution districts in the Merced to the discovery of familial abuse, among its 21.1 million inhabitants, Mexico City has become a volatile, intense, and complex location in any campaign aimed at eliminating CSEC in Mexico. It is worth mentioning that Mexico City's population size means that within its city limits, just about every social problem is represented. While also being home to the majority of civil society organizations that advocate against CSEC, it is a base for a multitude of organizations working to address a plethora of social problems that affect both the capital and the country. The result of a high concentration in wealth, the presence of a young, creative, and progressive population, and a number of challenging social and economic problems, is the ever an emergence of social experimentation and innovation among Mexico City's active civil society community.

A cultural and economic component further underlie Mexico City's role as the centre for NGO work regarding CSEC. Economically, the city contributes most to the Mexican gross domestic product and offers a surprising per capita income of $25,000 USD per year (Hawksworth et al, 2009). While the income is of course an average, it reflects at its least the high level of educated and professional individuals within the city. This, combined with a strong progressively liberal culture creates the kind of environment conducive to a large and active presence of NGOs. Concurrently, Mexico's progressive leanings are in part the result of the

city's large population, the presence of important public institutions of higher education, and the strain placed on the city to confront the gamut of social issues faced by a metropolitan area of its size. For MacDonald and Mahon, the city's role as the centre of Mexican national politics and culture, makes it a unique space in which to test out innovative social policy (2010). For instance, a special feature of the metropolis is its local cultures, which have been historically receptive to and engaged in social or mass movilization (such as *las manifestaciones*, *marchas* or *mítines*) to the emblematic Zócalo with the purpose of addressing different kinds of social problems and political causes. The enormous presence of NGOs in the city is thus, the result not simply of the centralized political system, but of the reality of the location. Mexico City contains a population the size of many small and medium sized countries, and it manages this population with limited resources. Despite the city's impressive infrastructure, the problems created by poverty result in an immense need for intervention on the part of civil society—needs routinely met by a formalized, professional, and educated class. Indeed, when mapping out the locations of the offices of the NGOs I met with, those that did not work directly with victims were located in the nicer, more developed parts of the city—a cue to the socioeconomic backgrounds of many of the professionals working in the NGO sector in Mexico (as in many other parts of the world).

During conversations with organizational leaders, it became hard to discern which frustrations were allusions to the structural ineptitudes of the neoliberal state and which were simply the product of an always corrupt and neglectful Mexican state simply neglecting and poorly engaging an apparently new yet complex social problem. For many organizational leaders, the distinction was made within the public discourse, the signing of international protocols against CSEC and the public announcements made by various members of the state to address CSEC in a serious and engaged manner. For them, this was the characteristic of the new

Mexican state, in which the presentation of attention was tantamount to actually giving attention to the issue. As one informant put it,

> Before, the state might take a problem like this and deny it or say it's not really that much of a problem or that we're exaggerating. Now it's different. Every so often the media will report a story about trafficking or abuse of children and the state will address this issue saying this or that, but after the cameras are gone, it will go back to business as normal.[2]

In further developing this point, the new politics of neoliberalism demands a level of media accountability from the state, a representation of the state as doing something, even if it decides not to. Encouraging the state to be attentive is not enough, because the state can easily agree with organizational demands, reaffirming the fact that such concerns are of the most importance to officials in power. Likewise, the media based politics of neoliberal states demands such attention, quelling the resolve of would-be activists, while maintaining a progressive stance friendly to international investors. As many informants affirmed, so long as CSEC and the social problems it represents are not against the business climate of Mexico, structural reform can be allowed to wait, always on the table yet never on the move.

At the same time, organizational members expressed their gratitude for the many state officials they work with on a daily basis. At both the level of attending to victims and prevention, organizations repeatedly mentioned that while large reforms at the federal and state level were difficult, functionaries within state health offices, local prosecutors, tourism boards, and even some legislative representatives were instrumental in their work. In addition, many organizations reported partnering closely with the state, sharing opinions in meetings, receiving state support

[2] Original text in Spanish: "Antes, el estado hubiera dicho que el problema no existe, o no es tan mal o que estamos exagerando. Ahora es diferente, a veces la prensa presentará una cuenta sobre el traficante de niños o abuso de niños en una parte de México y el estado dirigirá el problema, diciendo una cosa o otra, pero después de que las cámaras se alejan, el estado se vuelve a sus negocios como siempre."

for certain projects, and working closely with specific legal departments at the city and state level to put abusers behind bars and protect victims. This account of the neoliberal state suggests that while public discourse on the matters of CSEC has yet to lead to important reforms, it has impacted the priorities and kind of work functionaries pursue at the local level. Further, contrary to more extreme characterizations of a closed off and economically driven neoliberal state, my conversations with NGOs suggests that at least on the day to day operations of the state, a close and productive partnership between NGOs exists to address important issues related to CSEC.

Similar to the seemingly contradictory relationship between NGOs and the state, funding for organizations illustrated an example of the way the neoliberal condition influences the work of NGOs working against CSEC. According to each organization I interviewed, funding for NGO projects, operations, and other costs was primarily the result of an influx of funding from international donors. As mentioned before, organizations received funding from the US Department of State, but also from other international governments, the Mexican state, funding foundations, and partnerships with larger, international NGO networks. Yet, despite the wide array of funding available, organizations repeatedly echoed the complaint that the amount of funding was not enough, and that compared to other problems that receive similar attention, funding was below average.[3] In addition, organizations reported frustrations with the competing nature of garnering grant funding. As one informant asserted, "If they receive money, it means we don't,"[4] hinting at the zero sum game organizations play to secure support.

Those analyzing the funding strategies for NGOs have noted both how the growth of NGOs in the neoliberal era as well as the growth of funding outlets has created the kind of competitive layout described by those I spoke with. In this system, NGOs become evaluated

[3] Organizations actually did not disclose how much funding they received, rather, they only accounted for where the funding went. In this claim, I'm simply taking their word for it.
[4] Original text in Spanish: "Si ellos reciben dinero, significa que nosotros no recibimos."

based on competitive schemes designed to ensure money is given to projects that have the most impact or mesh closely with the intentions of the funding organization. Of course these standards are in many respects political, meaning that in order for organizations to secure funding, they must organize themselves in ways that do not offend the politics of the funding organization. Even further, it restricts the kinds of partnerships organizations can make, since collaborating or using funding to support larger, more controversial projects (for example, involvement in a protest or demonstration), might go against the prescribed rules funding often comes along with. For some organizations, this was certainly a concern. In one instance, an organization leader described how funding could only be secured for projects, not simply for the operational costs of the organization, and that those projects required specific approval. This comment hinted, of course, to the way foundation grants created limitations as to what issues project proposals could address and what issues were outside a project's scope. This kind of funding scheme left out certain goals many of the organizations believed in, but had no means of executing, such as designing initiatives to deal with the so called "machismo" traditionally promoting gender inequality in Mexican society. In this situation, the contradiction was obvious; organization depended on and received funding that allowed organizations to carry out necessary and important projects related to anti-CSEC advocacy. However, securing funding also created limitations that prevented organizations from effectively addressing broader structural issues related to CSEC—either because of these issues were "too abstract" (like sexism) or because they were distinctly partisan (like economic or judicial reform), and thereby violated rules set by the funding institution.

Finally, national and international networking strategies employed by the NGOs I spoke with exemplified many of the new challenges and opportunities inherent to working within the

neoliberal condition. All organizations I spoke with were connected not only to lines of funding that extended from the Northern hemisphere into Mexico, but in addition, they were connected to larger international organizations working against CSEC. This included ECPAT, but also Save the Children and a number of prominent religious organizations based in the United States and Europe. Further, many of the organizations were connected together within larger national networks that worked towards the promotion of children's rights, ending exploitation, and elimination of forced trafficking. Many organization leaders described their relationship within these networks as positive, even strategic given the absence of an abundance of resources directed at CSEC prevention and elimination. Similarly, networking was described as a way to connect local instances of a certain problem (say child prostitution in Mexico City with trafficking in Chiapas) to a larger set of voices demanding an end to that problem. Networks provided international support and media attention, connections with volunteers and experts overseas, and entrance into a global dialogue on ways in which CSEC could be prevented.

Much like the development of international funding organizations, the proliferation of international and national networking is in many ways part of the neoliberal, global condition in which cheap communication, affordable air travel, and the growth of international media outlets has allowed for NGOs from across the world to connect to one another. Zizek (2009) describes this growth as the natural result of the enormous profits garnered by corporations that have taken advantage of markets forced to open up to global investment. Thinking about it this way, the Ford Foundation, Millennium Gates, and other corporate based funding organizations have made possible the growth of NGOs throughout the world by cause the same social and economic destabilization the NGOs they fund try and fix (Zizek, 2009). At the same time, the economic and political climate that has made international networking of NGOs possible is in part due to

the restraining power of global capitalism to de-politicize social justice movements in such a way as to pose little threat to the opening up of markets and the movement of capital (Fisher, 1997). Put differently, the kinds of technologies, social terrain, and political atmosphere that leads to the networking of NGOs is only possible if the economic and political conditions characteristic of neoliberalism are put in place. In this way, we are presented with a seemingly difficult contradiction, the maintenance of networking tools at the expense of more radical resistance against the processes and practices of neoliberalism.

In my conversations with organization leaders, this contradiction came up a number of times. Responses among informants varied, with some seeing the contradiction as too abstract to address effectively, the result being to prefer the movement and support networking allowed. Others engaged the contradiction more critically, understanding that in the future, networks would have to respond to these issues and create a strategy of political resistance that addressed components of the neoliberal condition. Indeed, one network leader I spoke with was already moving in that direction. While still in the organizing phases, the leader I spoke with described the need to broaden the scope of exploitation to encompass labour exploitation and understand the ways in which the market made not only children vulnerable to sexual exploitation, but immigrants from Central American vulnerable to abuse, or women susceptible to participating in prostitution against their will. Key to this project was to move the concern away from the specific aspects of abuse people face, and instead understand those instances of exploitation within the structural apparatuses supported politically, socially, and economically by neoliberalism in Mexico. Despite in the inclusiveness of the position, my last conversation with the leader of this network revealed that an assortment of frustrations came along with putting this kind of organizing strategy into practice. Specifically, these challenges included difficulty among

organizations as to what exactly constituted being exploited, an unwillingness to share resources, and resistance by groups to the firm stance the network wanted to take against neoliberalism in Mexico.

At the level of CSEC, what seems most clear from my interviews and conversations with NGOs working at the front lines is that at each corner, neoliberalism, perhaps like any social and economic condition, offers certain spaces where resistance is possible, and yet closes others as well. While organizations seem to be managing these contradictions while remaining true to their cause, evidence suggests such a contradictory posture is not tenable for long. In some of my final conversations with groups, the issue of funding suggested that new strategies of organizing might have to be employed to keep programs running in the wake of an international charity community hit hard by global financial crisis. In many ways, the impetus for the last network I spoke of to develop broader lines of contact between organizations and movements was in part related to the need to create a larger political voice in a time where funding seems more scarce than ever. What has resulted are renewed conversations and the beginnings of the development of strategies aimed at resisting the larger structures that allow for CSEC, and other forms of exploitation, to remain in existence. At its core, the movement seems to have the intention of finding ways to effectively respond to neoliberalism in Mexico, but in the case of CSEC, it also demands an effective response to more complex issues like gender inequality, cultural attitudes about sexuality, and the closed off spaces of familial relations. Additionally, it means addressing corruption within the Mexican state and finding ways to effectively respond to drug trafficking, especially as the routes used to smuggle drugs has also been implicated in the smuggling of arms, and women and children for sexual purposes (Cacho, 2005). Though a mounting set of issues to address, all in many ways directly related to CSEC, as one informant reflected,"I can't

be pessimistic, I always have to be positive because I know what I do is right and because I believe I can these things can change."

Section 3

God Never Opens a Window without Closing a Door: Final Thoughts on Neoliberalism and Civil Society in Mexico

Neoliberal policy has reduced the state at the expense of inflating the need for civil society. Developing countries like Mexico were unprepared on the level of infrastructure to deal with the kind of social insecurity neoliberal economic policy brought with it. The result has been a dramatic increase in the gap between the rich and the poor, and a greater amount of Mexicans working within the informal economy coupled with a surprising rise in the number of millionaires in Mexico and the fact that Forbes recently declared Carlos Slim, a Lebanese-Mexican businessman, the wealthiest man in the world.

Neoliberal policy has also meant new kinds of political conflicts that have been accompanied by social problems such as unprecedented immigration to the United States over the past 25 years, massive urbanization within Mexico, as well as the violence created by organized crime. This has included the militarization of the fight against organized drug trafficking, and a deferral on the part of the state to civil society to deal with a host social problem that plague Mexico. After the contested election of Calderón in 2006, the violence has worsened every year. Critics within and outside of Mexico increasingly blame the militarization of the drug war by the Calderón administration for the unprecedented carnage that continues across Mexico. Concurrently, cartels continue to expand into other kinds of criminal activity, diversifying their business to include prostitution, human trafficking, weapons smuggling, and

financial crimes. As the violence comes to affect more and more Mexicans, the cartels are moving from the shadows of Mexican society to the forefront, competing alongside other social groups for political power and social control. Because of their use of extreme violence, cartels are a social problem civil society is unprepared to successfully confront, yet with the unsuccessful escalation of military violence against the cartels; there is an urgent need for non-violent, socially centred solution to the violence. As I finish this MA thesis in the Fall of 2011, some newspapers in Mexico assert that between 40,000 and 50,000 people have died as part of this unprecedented wave of violence in Mexican society.

At the same time, civil society has met the challenge of the neoliberal condition in interesting and creative ways. Although paradoxically and contradictory in some ways, it has pulled a professional class into the fight against grave social problems that might otherwise have stayed ignored if not for the money and freedom available to civil society actors. In the consequences it has created, it has similarly facilitated the emergence of a bold and radical resistance politics aiming to think past market relations and question the corruption and political problems damaging the possibility of having a true Mexican democracy. At the same time, neoliberalism has been accompanied by increased globalization, a phenomenon that has enriched but also constrained organized efforts. More than just Mexicans are now actively invested in combating CSEC, and this entails new international alliances, as well as new limitations to the future work of organizations. Such difficulties are requiring strategic negotiation by civil society actors, and in my experience with those working against CSEC, they are meeting the challenge daily.

In concluding, I suggest that the way organizations in Mexico operate might be more complicated than one might expect, and within that complication, more mundane, routine, and

fraught with the normal obstacles one faces when advocating on behalf of an issue. In the collection of essays *The Revolution Will not Be Funded*, (Incite!, 2007) authors from various sectors of the non-governmental and advocacy community discuss the many problems NGOs face because of the influence foundations have on the work of these groups. In their conclusion, they insist that deep changes need to be made in the balance of power and resources that shape progressive advocacy worldwide. Many of the advocates I spoke with echoed these concerns, adding to them the unique frustrations faced undertaking advocacy work in Mexico. Political corruption and stagnation, the absence of an effective rule of law, and the ever present waves of violence due to the drug wars added to the additional challenges of mobilizing support, securing financial resources, and maintaining organization momentum. Yet the problems cited by organization are not impossible to overcome, my interviews revealed both an acceptance of these challenges and a willingness to find creative solutions to the problems organizations faced. In this way, I view the advocacy groups I interviewed as both pragmatic and idealistic, launching forward their mission on a firm ground that simultaneously remains open to criticism and adaptable to the changing political and social context organizations confront.

Neoliberalism, with all of its many changes to Mexican society, might not be so monolithic either, but instead entail a range of governance strategies that only loosely conform to the prioritization of market forces in the state's social, political, and economic activity. This might help explain how certain social problems are allowed to remain relatively unaddressed (CSEC), while others are given unprecedented priority, such as the so called "drug wars" and the unprecedented violence that has erupted some regions, including but not limited to the Northeast region (Tamaulipas, Nuevo León and Coahuila) and other states such as Guerrero, and the chronically hurt Ciudad Juárez. In this way, neoliberalism as a conceptual tool might fall short in

describing the kinds of problems and opportunities organizations face as they work day to day. As mentioned in this chapter, the contemporary, professionalized NGO movement in Mexico owes a lot to market effects that resulted from neoliberal or "globalizing" policy. As networks, partnerships, and new kinds of mobilization efforts emerge within the newly formed structural apparatuses created by open markets, the consequence could be less intuitive and far more hopeful than previously thought.

Chapter 2

The Unknown Knowns: Mexican Civil Society and the Problem of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

Introduction

What motivates people to come together an act for a single cause? I asked myself this question constantly as I interviewed activists and advocates in Mexico involved in combating CSEC. Though on face a naïve or simple question, I believe the question gets at a central idea in any kind of organizing based on making the world a better place. Why this and why not that? Why spend the energy, money, and time trying to find ways to solve one problem at the expense of other important social issues or even one's self-interest? In delving into the motivation of those I spoke with, the answer I constantly received was two-fold. First, because of how serious the problem of CSEC is, and second, because the problem is growing and remains increasingly unaddressed by official authorities. Both reasons operate under certain premises that I will address in this chapter. Within the first reason, what is implied is a hierarchy of suffering, especially suffering faced by children. It suggests that the suffering children undergo as victims of sexualized violence is morally reprehensible and deserving of special attention on the part of the state and civil society. In the second reason, the premise is that we know for sure that the problem of CSEC is in fact growing---a fact that within the Mexican context remains speculative at best.

The above premises imply the production of a reality on the part of the organizations and suggest a conceptualization of CSEC in Mexico both grounded in fact, but also an ideological production that remains contested. Ideologically speaking, it gets at what Slovenian

psychoanalyst and social theorist Slavoj Zizek (2008) refers to as the "unknown knowns," or the beliefs we have about the world based on ideological investments in a set of facts or understandings. Using an interview with Donald Rumsfeld to illustrate the point, Zizek recalls how the invasion of Iraq was premised on the belief that despite the fact we did not "know" Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, that fact that it remained uncertain served as the reason itself for our invasion. Even if we could not provide concrete evidence of Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction, we "knew" (at least in the popular debates) for sure they possessed something. For Zizek, the unknown known is the space where ideologies can be reinforced through a call to act under uncertainty. What might be called our "intuition," might alternatively be described as the force that keeps practices going even when the facts are not on our side. By claiming to "know' something despite not really "knowing," Zizek insists we provide a space for ideology to nestle and serve as the unconscious motivator for our actions. In Rumseld's case, the real reason to invade Iraq (oil, desire to depose Saddam Hussein, etc.) was mystified by the uncertain claim that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction.

Zizek's insight is extremely useful for thinking about the motivating factors that keep advocates embedded in the struggle against CSEC in Mexico. Other than a study published ten years ago by UNICEF, no publicly available quantitative analysis exists on the extent and scope of CSEC in Mexico. In the past ten years, though, the amount of organizations fighting against trafficking and exploitation of children has grown immensely and continues to be an issue given more and more attention by international funding agencies, the Mexican government, and foreign governments. Advocates claim that despite the absence of reliable data, they are certain the problem continues to grow, yet the discrepancy between the amount of time and energy used to combat CSEC and the absence of data as to the extent of the problem and the effectiveness of the

work of advocates suggests an ideological apparatus at work that is masking the real motivation for such a large, organized, and global support for the work of anti-CSEC advocates in Mexico.

My decision to engage this question in my research comes from the inspiring work of O'Connell Davidson (2005) and Gould (2010). Both authors argue extensively for the need to revisit the operating facts about commercial sexual exploitation of women and children. Through a review of the data produced as well as a discursive analysis of how the data is used, both authors suggest that CSEC might in fact be part of a larger plan to expand the police's role in society and the jurisdiction of the state. Most importantly, is that both authors suggest that the data used to motivate governments, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), and NGOs into action might in fact be misleading, exaggerated, and incorrect. Yet, most of the activists and advocates I spoke with remain convinced that despite the absence of absolute data, CSEC remains a growing problem with troublesome social implications.

My goal is this chapter is not necessarily to provide a new context in which Gould and O'Connell Davidson's analysis might be correct, but rather to carefully demonstrate through the work of civil society the operational power of working under the premise of Zizek's "unknown knowns." Put differently, I explore a complex question: how does the social context of Mexico, the nature of the problem of CSEC, and motivational beliefs of activists come together to create a civil society actively involved in combating CSEC? Based on my interviews, I explore potential answers in this chapter, which is organized into three sections. In the first section I provide an overview of CSEC on a global and domestic level, illustrating how the phenomenon is defined and characterized by contested definitions that have the effect of creating contested figures as to the size and scope of the problem. In the next section, I illustrate how CSEC as a concept settles within the social, economic, and political framework of Mexico. I suggest that the destabilization

of society created both by economic restructuring as well as through the recent growth in violence and organized crime, allows for some "unknowns" to become treated as "knowns"; as agreed upon social expectations that are discursively reinforced. In the final section, I look closely at how this dynamic plays out in civil society by examining how the leaders, activists, and advocates push forward even while working with unknown "knowns" in mind. It is here where I suggest an alternative reading to the unknown "knowns" dilemma, seeing it not as a mystifying force, but rather as an important ideological strategy for creating awareness and advancing change.

Section 1: How Large is the Problem?

A. The Global Context

According to a number of sources, the global scale of CSEC is anywhere from several hundred thousand to several million per year (US Department of State 2010). Within this group, it is believed the majority of victims are girls and that the age range for most victims is between 13 and 17 years old. Those involved in commercial sexual exploitation are also named as "victims of trafficking." Their entrance into forced sex work is often the result of deception or manipulation by would be exploiters (normally male) but might also entail violent forms of coercion at the hands of those involved in organized crime. The story painted by several international monitoring bodies is of a market that is growing and increasingly outside the reigns of authorities. At the same time, it is believed that the lines of smuggling followed by traffickers are similar to arms and drugs, leading many to believe the three are related and connected to international organized crime syndicates (ECPAT, 2007).

Gould (2010), however, contends that a close examination of these numbers suggests that our grasp of the situation might be less certain. Starting from the premise made by most researchers and monitoring bodies (that trafficking is a difficult problem to assess because of its clandestine nature); Gould contends that researchers will use this as, "an excuse for small samples from which generalized conclusions are reached" (2010, 33). Quantitatively, the result is the production of figures, which remain exaggerated because of the inaccessibility of the true sample size of victims. This is, of course problematic as such data becomes the motivating factor for international campaigns aimed at ending CSEC. At the same time, it suggests a level of dissonance between the kind of knowledge we have about a problem and the kind of funding and attention that problem receives publicly. Thinking about global warming, an environmental problem from which there exists extensive literature, its level of public truth is often the site of much controversy and contestation. Yet, on the whole, CSEC, from which there is little data and even less rigor in the production of such data, we have a social truth that often remains uncontested or challenged within popular discourse and even among researchers and policy makers.

Yet, in addition to shaky data on the subject of CSEC, it is also a hard problem to pin down. O'Connell Davidson (2005) makes the case for a rethinking of the notion of CSEC when she discusses how legal and operative definitions are used to denote situations that require deeper reflection. Through an example using her research on teenage girls in Colombia, O'Connell Davidson suggests that the choice on the part of these girls to participate in sex work comes from a rational choice being made not to participate in paid domestic labor. In domestic labor, the girls complained of being paid low wages, but also of being subject to sexual harassment and assault. The choice to participate in paid sex work, then, seemed like the reasonable decision since the

pay was better and there was at least the understanding that sexual services would be performed. Where one form of labor is legal and the other a cause for international concern, O'Connell Davidson argues that our anxieties about CSEC come from socially constructed beliefs about what it means to be a child. Children are those individuals under the age of 18, they are not sexual, and they do not possess rational or legal agency to make decisions. O'Connell Davidson takes issues with these premises, showing how the arbitrary age of 18 does not adequately give us a bright line for determining whether someone is a child or not. And "child" as a category does not capture, according to O'Connell Davidson, the complex life history and experiences of an adolescent boy who is 17 years old, vis-à-vis, for example, a boy who is 6 or 7 years old. Comparing the lives of children in the so called "developing world" to children in the "developed world," O'Connell Davidson illustrates how many of the responsibilities we associate with adulthood in the developed world are tasks many below the age of 18 in the developing world are capable of undertaking. Thus, the subjectivity of child is not simply an inherent stage in the course of human development, but a socio-juridical production mainly informed by the experiences of those in the developed world.

The implication here is that data describing the number of the children sexually exploited might simply include children who may not think of themselves as children, but also exaggerate a relationship that is not entirely exploitative. This is because exploitation is premised in part on the absence of consent, of being placed in an unequal relationship with one's employer and thus not having the power or freedom to decide on a fair price of one's labor, on the kinds of conditions one will work in, and the kind of labor one will perform. By legal definition, children do not possess the agency to determine whether their conditions of employment are exploitative or not, yet O'Connell Davidson argues that countless instances exist in which children illustrate

an ability to exercise agency and respond rationally to their conditions. While it is certainly not true for all children who are sexually exploited, O'Connell Davidson's point is that the exploitative relationship children in sexual labor face is no different than adult men and women involved in sex work. Because the definition of what it means to be a child is one premised upon unstable and arbitrary premises such as age and level of agency, we must accept the possibility of some "children" engaging in commercial sex work out of a rational choice based on their limited options of employment. If these children are counted under quantitative statistics, what we get is a potential inflation and exaggeration of the problem—one without the kind of contextualization needed for effectively giving voice to the nuance of experiences faced by those children involved in commercial sexual exploitation.

In Mexico, the data on CSEC does not delineate the experience of children counted as exploited based on the line of experiences that led them into sex work. Discussions with some advocates revealed this to be an important distinction, not only in theory, but in practice. One advocate described a story in which during a court proceeding, the judge noted the victim's clothing, whereabouts, and demeanour to suggest, even at 15, she was actively involved in prostitution and was not a victim of sexual exploitation. During their exchange, it was revealed she had decided to participate in prostitution, yet for the advocate, this admission did not draw away from the fact that she was a victim of a crime and deserved special protection even if she had made a choice—albeit an ultimately bad choice. Dealing with the notion of choice, another advocate expressed a different perspective, noting how any successful program that would dissuade children from participating in sex work entailed getting those children into other kinds of work. In his experience formal education and special protections were not as effective as the job training program he ran for former victims of CSEC because the central difference was that

in his program, the children were treated as adults and held accountable for their behaviour. Both cases help to illustrate how in practice, different contexts can reveal some of the central challenges that a strict definition of child entails, but also the way advocates deal with these challenges in varying ways.

Creating definitions may have the effect of creating situations in which the complexity of a problem is ignored or overlooked. The result is that a definition can leave the experiences of some out, while including the experiences of others. In Mexico, as in other parts of the world, linguistic distinctions are made between children or "niños" and those of adolescent age or "menor de edad." Yet, even within these distinctions, particular age related expectations are made that overly simplify notions of agency, adulthood, and maturity. CSEC as it is understood on the global scale fits into this conceptualization since the vague concept of "child" creates an umbrella that encompasses the experiences of those who might not describe their situation as any more exploitative than is already the case within a depressed labor market in which laborers are plentiful and employers are scarce. These children might see their situation as better off than those who work in other low pay jobs that demand long hours and routine exposure to danger. At the same time, CSEC definitions have the effect of excluding those who happen to be over the age of 18, suggesting their particular experience as sex workers is in some way fundamentally different to the exploitative situation children undergo. In fact, it might be quite the opposite: it might be that the situation of children is no different at all and deeply related to the unequal position of laborers under a capitalist economic system---ultimately a question of labor, not of sex.

B. Domestic Context: The Case of Mexico

Over the course of my fieldwork, the one study that was cited over and over again by civil society organizations was one published in 2000 and carried out by anthropologist and psychoanalyst Elena Azaola. Entitled "Boy and Girl Victims of Sexual Exploitation in Mexico" the study undertook a survey of six locations in Mexico (Guadalajara, Tijuana, Acapulco, Cancun, Tapachula, and Ciudad Juárez) in which it interviewed state actors, civil society leaders, and victims of CSEC, ultimately determining that every year anywhere from 16,000 to 20,000 children are sexually exploited in Mexico for commercial purposes (Azaola, 2000). According to one organization leader, the study "*recibió mucha atención*," garnering the focus of international and government officials and spurring the public into alarm and action. In fact, for two of the organizations I interviewed, the study was heavily influential in creating the money and motivation for advocates to come together and begin to organize against the problem.

A close examination of the conclusion of the study, however, reveals that aside from providing an approximation, the figures the study provides are at best educated estimates to the problem. Azaola states:

> Even though these figures cannot be considered definitive, but rather a first approximation, we believe they are useful because they provide parameters that other studies can use to continue advancing towards a more accurate delimitation of both the total number of children exploited and the different categories into which they can be divided. They also seem useful to us for formulating estimates of the size of the phenomenon at a national level, which can be done taking into account the size and characteristics of the localities. (2000,115)

Yet, aside from a handful of local studies conducted in Mexico, no such large scale study has taken place ever since. In addition, the UNICEF study excluded Mexico City and several other border and tourist destinations where CSEC is thought to be a serious problem. Such exclusions might suggest that the estimated prevalence of the problem might be in fact understated, yet at the same time, the nature of CSEC might suggest the scaling used in the study might be an overestimation as well. The fact is, no one knows for certain and since an updated study has yet to be undertaken, advocates I spoke with were left to hesitantly refer to the results here.

That said, during the 2000s two important studies were conducted in Mexico City regarding CSEC, both by the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos of Mexico City. The first, published in 2006, described Mexico City as being ill equipped to deal with the growing problem of CSEC (Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal, 2006). Based off survey data and interviews with specialists and city officials, the study concluded that mass childhood homeless was the largest contributing factor to sexual exploitation of children in the city. Basing its results off the work of previous studies, the report suggested that CSEC in Mexico could be as high as 12,000 victims per year (Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal, 2006). For one of the organizations I met with, the study undertaken by the Commission was a watershed moment and according to Comunidades Unidas's program coordinator, the founder of Comunidades Unidas was one of the lead investigators and authors of the report, and after its publication, she decided to start Comunidades Unidas in order to address several of the problems the report uncovered.

Yet, the report relies to an extent on (1) other quantitative reports, and (2) the authors' reasoning to develop specific conclusions. For starters, most of the information the report uses to determine the number of sexually exploited children comes from reviewing data on homeless

children and research done on determining how children became homeless. This leads the study to use a figure from another study that found that 90% of homeless children in Mexico City had undergone some form of sexual abuse (either from family members, close friends, or strangers) to suggest that those same children are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. This is misleading, especially as the Azaola study specifically points out that by definition, "victims of sexual abuse" might not necessarily be "victims of commercial sexual exploitation." Commercial sexual exploitation describes an exploitative relationship in which children perform sexual labor for clients at the benefit for a third party, which might ultimately be different from sexual abuse, which includes unwanted sexual violence with our without the exchange of money (Azaola, 2000). In my conversation with the director of Red Contra la Explotación, I was told of a second study undertaken in 2009 and completed in the beginning part of 2010. Supported by the Comisión Nacional De Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal and conducted by Rodolfo Casillas, study was designed to assess the "the number of boys and girls in DF who are victims of sexual exploitation."[5] In cooperation with the Procuraduría de Justicia's newly appointed special prosecutor focused on crime against women and trafficking, the study sought to provide a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the situation of women and children in Mexico who are sexual exploited for commercial purposes. Yet, despite the results of the study being ready, those involved were forced to sign special agreements keeping the findings of the study confidential for 10 years. When I asked why, I was told, "we are asking the same thing," yet when asking this question to the state, the director reported, "they told us that it's a point of national security."[6] Thus, Mexican civil society operates under the inconclusive facts of one national study and one local study—both at best rough estimates of the actual situation of CSEC

[5] Original text in Spanish: "cantidad de niños y niñas en DF que son victimas de explotación sexual infantil."
[6] Original text in Spanish: "estamos preguntando lo mismo" and "dijeron que es una cuestión de seguridad nacional."

in Mexico. The absence of clearly defined statistics or of a recurring study, however, has not been the subject of much controversy in Mexico, but rather, has found a place within the other looming social problems the country faces. As I write this thesis, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and violence have become the most pressing concerns that continue to wreak havoc on the Mexican population. Although these issues are having a more damaging and dramatic impact in some regions when compared to others, they further destabilize the political, economic, and social life of many in Mexico. It is within this context that CSEC sits, nestled against a bloody internal conflict with organized crime, and an economic situation that has deteriorated over the last two decades of neoliberal economic reform.

Section 2: Mexico, Where Anything is Possible and Nothing is Forbidden

The Mexico of danger, lawlessness, and rampant criminal behavior is not simply the stuff of exaggerated racist and paternalistic movies and television shows. Since Calderón took office in 2006 and decided to engage the drug cartels in a violent and military led war, the number of casualties has exploded. The conflict in Mexico remains one of the bloodiest, claiming tens of thousands of lives and topping both the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan as one of the most brutal ongoing conflicts. A report by the Wall Street Journal earlier this year put the current death toll in Mexico to about 34,000, suggesting that if current trends continued we would see an overall death toll of 65,000 by end of Calderón's term (de Cordoba and Luhnow, 2011). In the process, the international community has become exposed to a Mexico of decapitated civilians and police officers, assassinated government officials, and other ruthless and destructive forms of violence that have led thousands to seek refuge in the United States and in other parts of the country outside of the conflict zones. For instance, many wealthy families in cities like Ciudad

Juárez and Nuevo León have crossed into the United States to seek safety from the drug related violence (Giovine, 2011).

Similarly, Mexico's security concerns have become a regular talking point for conservative politicians in the United States who claim to protect border areas from the spillover of the Mexican drug wars. This has led the media the focus more attention on Mexico, paying more attention to undocumented immigrants, trafficking of persons from Mexico into the United States and trafficking of drugs and weapons between both sides of the border. Coupled with an already developed image of Mexico as a corrupt society lacking certain degrees of the rule of law and government accountability, it has become easy to believe that Mexico's lawlessness is a pernicious and difficult problem of the governmental apparatus, which may lead many citizens to experience chronic helplessness and impotence. It is within this context, that the international effort to prevent and combat trafficking is able to resonate and from where I believe the unknown known of CSEC gains a level of truth.

As the story goes, Mexico's present social, political, and economic context must be understood through a historical appreciation of the effects of neoliberal policy and free trade economic policy. Specifically related to the passage of NAFTA in 1994, but also other economic reforms including land reform and privatization, Mexico's policy of Important Substitution Industrialization (ISI) was dismantled at the expense of putting both farmers and high skill industrial workers out of jobs (Thacker, 1999; Gledhill, 1995; Harris; 2000). This led to the growth of low skill, low pay factory jobs at the border between Mexico and the United States, mass migration from Mexico into the United States, and unprecedented urbanization. The social effects of this move are numerous, generally involving an increase in unemployment, an increase of individuals involved in the informal sector of the economy, a growth in economic inequality,

growth of people living in unsafe and unsanitary conditions, and a depopulation of rural communities (Cooney, 2001; Muir, 2003; Pastor and Wise; 1997; Torres; 2003; Ramirez, 2000). Combined with a defunding of the state and a heightened level of economic and social insecurity, many have suggested that the growth and turn to crime in Mexico is a natural result of the post-neoliberal condition. For instance, increased immigration has been identified as clandestine and sometimes forced immigration, sex tourism has been associated with the development and growth of tourist areas on Mexico's coast, and of course, the growth of prostitution in large urban centres in Mexico has been related to the centrality of these locations to businessmen and financiers (Walters and Davis, 2011; Gibson, 2009).

For Malesevic (2008), the sociological tendency to emphasize the dramatic shifts taking place in the present result in a myopic view of social systems and social change (2008). The result is a discursive production on the part of researchers, mass media, and public intellectuals to draw dramatic conclusions from relatively short periods in history. At the same time, there is a tendency to see a particular period in history as abundantly unique and thus representative of a condition, concept, shift, or epoch (Malesevic, 2008). In Mexico, the social reality of increased economic, social, political, and now personal insecurity come hand in hand with the creation of a discursive field in which all forms of crime are possible. Thus, the exaggerated statistics on the incidence and prevalence of CSEC both at the global and domestic level reinforce their own truth within the perceived lawless spaces of Mexico.

The point here is not to say that CSEC is not a serious problem in Mexico, but rather returning to the original question, why is this problem over other social concerns garner so much attention, especially when the statistics describing the problem are both outdated and methodologically questionable? O'Connell Davidson argues that the concern for preventing and

combating CSEC is derived from a conservative push to regulate women's bodies and support new kinds of state security interventions (2005). Yet, my experience with civil society in Mexico suggests this explanation does not fully account for the involvement of the largely liberal, progressive members of civil society that I met in Mexico City. By this I mean, that many of the civil society actors do not buy into the security discourse or the anti-feminist discourse O'Connell Davidson and others have argued is related to anti-trafficking/sexual exploitation policy. For them, it is not as though the statistics themselves are false or that the problem is exaggerated, but it is that the statistics are true, we just do not know for sure to what extent they are *actually* true. Operating on the level of an unknown known within the chaotic conditions of contemporary Mexican society allows for the supposed facts surrounding CSEC to exist as facts for advocates. In the next section of the thesis, I move to an examination of this phenomenon, using the information I received in interviews to create a reading of this situation that expresses what I see as the positive implication of operating within the space of the unknown known of CSEC.

Section 3: The Ideological Power of the Unknown Known and Civil Society Activism in Mexico against CSEC

For all the controversy surrounding CSEC, both as a social problem, but also as a social construction, the activists and advocates I spoke with had their hands full. Those attending to victims complained they did not have enough resources to deal with the full extent of the problem and activists working at the level of prevention similarly expressed a sense of being overwhelmed at the sheer extent of the issue both in Mexico City, but also around Mexico. They all relayed experiences that served as points of illustration of the size and scope of the problem

of CSEC in Mexico. "Each year we find more victims, more cases of exploitation,"[7] assertively stated a program coordinator. Others pointed to specific examples to illustrate their point. A director described a story in 2005 in which an orphanage in Puerto Vallarta was discovered to be doubling as a brothel in which young children were prostituted out to western tourists. A legal director took a similar rhetorical approach to the issue, pointing to examples of exploitation of children in the church, and the many cases that come to his desk each day. Unable to point to solid statistics (except for the Azaola study of 2000), each advocate solidified their belief in the growing rate of CSEC through their respective experiences with the problem. In fact, of the activists, there was only one skeptical voice, whose main criticism was simply that reliable statistics were unavailable, and thus, "uno no puede decir que 'si, está creciendo' o 'no, no está creciendo.'"[8]

For some, however, the absence of reliable statistics suggests something more pernicious at work on the part of those vehemently interested in combating and preventing CSEC. Gould (2010) believes it is an attempt on the part of policy makers to crack down on prostitution, while Wacquant's recent writings on the growth of sex offender laws in the US suggests it is an offshoot of the political investment in tough on crime legislation and policy (2009). For both authors, the need to question law enforcement crackdowns on trafficking and sexual exploitation come from the scant amount of information practitioners have on these two issues. Pointing to the effects of these policies, both Gould and Wacquant offer evidence that enforcement strategies are having disproportionately negative effects on women, people of color, and, the poor, including increased incarceration rates, heightened surveillance and control by the state, and a misunderstanding of the motivations that lead women into sex work (2010; 2009). O'Connell

[7] Original text in Spanish: "Cada año encontramos mas victimas, mas casos de explotación."
[8] English translation: "one can't say that, 'yes, it's growing' or that 'no, it's not growing.'"

Davidson argues that the fight against CSEC might be more deeply related to an attempt on the part of secular and religious folk to push against the feminist disruptions of the patriarchy (2005). With women's entrance into the workforce, their acquisition of greater legal rights, and their ability to more actively control who they wish to sleep with and when they will be pregnant, children come to represent the last conceptual stronghold of patriarchy (O'Connell Davidson, 2005). Thus, attempts to control children's participation in sexual labor reflects an attempt to keep the notion of a sexless child intact as well as underlying conservative assumptions about gender and legitimate labor.

The experience of those working in civil society, however, led to those I spoke with not really accepting this kind of critique. In fact, most pointed to the existence to CSEC as a part of the larger material consequences of patriarchy in Mexico, related to the idea in Mexican patriarchy that, "children, like women, are objects that do not have rights nor agency."[9] Thus, attempts to eradicate the problem implied working against the cultural notions that led people into accepting and participating in exploitation of women and children. While this goal is hard to translate into grants, the education work undertaken by several of the organization leaders I met with seems geared toward accomplishing this task. Comunidades Unidas's education work in rural and southern Mexico, not only works at informing parents and community leaders of the danger of allowing their children to work for individuals they do not know, but additionally entails informing parents and children of their rights. The legal director of another organization also spoke of the importance of education against patriarchy. Describing the re-victimization that often takes place in a courtroom or a legal proceeding, his organization works hard to train prosecutors, judges, and other legal officials on how patriarchy shapes important legal decisions. He noted one example in which, "during a trial, a judge asked the victim, 'what were you

[9] Original text in Spanish: "niños, como mujeres, son objectos que no tienen derechos ni agencia."

wearing?' insinuating that she was guilty (for what happened to her) because she was dressed in prostitute clothing."[10] He made sure to mention this was one of countless examples he had witnessed. In other words, this illustrates how patriarchal notions of women and sexuality in Mexican society operate within the legal system promoting the paradigm known as "blame the victim," which further punishes someone who is already victimized.

The issue on statistics was also a point many I spoke with aimed to challenge. While no activist could point to solid, up to date statistics on the level of incidence of CSEC, many were convinced through their work that CSEC was a serious and growing problem. At the same time, it was similarly suggested in a few interviews that several problems existed with trying to think of CSEC in terms of numbers. A director made this argument by relaying an experience his organization had with the Mexican state. During a campaign in which the organization worked to get a tourist code of ethics adopted by the municipal government in Cancún, he mentioned how this effort was thwarted when the Minister of Tourism refused to support the code since he did not want to admit Mexico had a sex tourism problem. For the government, the fear was that acknowledging the existence of sex tourism might result in fewer visitors, especially vacationing families. This experience convinced the director that state efforts to monitor the incidence rate of CSEC always lent itself to the potential for corruption and manipulation. Any statistics produced by the state on CSEC would either have to come with an end to corruption and an independent review of the findings, or a level of mediated scepticism—a scenario somewhat similar to the present circumstances.

Others suggested in various ways that even without the statistics, the proof of the problem was there. A director made this point when she mentioned that, "90 percent of the

[10] Original text in Spanish: "durante un proceso, el juez preguntó a la víctima, 'que estaba llevando?' insinuando que ella fue culpable por razón que estaba vestido en ropa como prostituta."

children we find are victims of sexual exploitation and there are many we don't even assist."[11] Even so, the unknown known quality of CSEC suggests that operating under the presumption that the problem is vast and growing can be instrumental in garnering support, mobilizing individuals, and pushing for reform. Creating a balance between supporting extensive police and security presence and creating meaningful reform of the system is the predicament faced by organizations that must deal with the factual uncertainty of CSEC. Of course, this is the not necessarily unique to CSEC policy, as all attempts to reform or change the system run the potential of creating new kinds of problems. The politics of the meaning of CSEC, however, were thought of as secondary concerns for civil society organizations as they were always well aware of the damaging and painful effects CSEC placed on victims.

Thus, even if the facts surrounding CSEC are overstated (though almost all felt it was not), such inflation could be strategic if thought of as a way to bring about reform in other realms of Mexican society—like the courts, the corruption, and lack of economic opportunity. The "unknown known" of CSEC could serve as an ideological force from which to mobilize multiple issues around the need for reform. While the political implications of moving in that direction posed potential consequences for long term activist struggles (something I address later in the thesis), if read as a leftist and progressive strategy, then the criticism posed by Gould and others is less easy to accept.

This is not to say that running on an absence of facts or misinformation is the key to creating good social policy, rather I want to insist in a more subtle, yet strategic use for the "unknown knowns" theory. The reality is that CSEC is a problem, and each year large numbers of children are subjected to traumatizing sexual experiences that are both morally

[11] Original text in Spanish: "90 por ciento de los niños que encontramos son víctimas de explotación sexual y hay bastante que no atendimos."

unconscionable and easily prevented. As noted in several parts of this project, CSEC is a problem intertwined to the many other social problems Mexico faces, meaning any viable solution must entail a multilayered examination of the issues at stake. Getting caught up in the factual inconsistencies of CSEC data might only frustrate attempts on the part of advocates and activists to mobilize for change. While Zizek suggests that the "unknown knowns" concept is a form of mystification, my research suggests that within the space of the "unknown knowns" of CSEC, advocates make a leap of faith based on the work they undertake and their belief in what is right. These advocates cannot afford to halt their work and wait for the research or more accurate statistics to emerge, their puts them in constant contact with victims of CSEC.

Conclusion: **The Unknown and the Knowledge of Activism**

The need to know more about the problem of CSEC is a goal I feel through my discussions and my research that must be pursued. Any policy (short, mid, or long term) will have to find a way to gather as much factual information about CSEC as possible, especially if effective policy is to be developed and implemented. Indeed, activists are working towards that goal, trying to find ways to convince politicians and state officials to investigate this issue further and to make the results of any investigation public and open for scrutiny. Yet, realistically, that goal is a long time in the works, and in the meantime organizations must still battle the day-to-day realities of attending to victims and educating the public. Garnering support for that work requires the continued use of statistics and information that both unreliable, yet useful in making the case for funding, resources, and mobilized support. Concentrating on the credibility of the statistics only works to hurt these organizations and pull money away from this issue to another as organizations compete internationally for support. No organization can afford to make that

concession for the sake of "academic" truth—such a decision would be foolish and put many in serious danger. Thus, organizations in Mexico take advantage of the ideological power of the unknown known as a strategy for self-preservation, but also an image that might shock and persuade people to care.

Chapter 3

These Paths are Not so Certain:

The Politics of Civil Society Organizing Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Post-Neoliberal Mexico

Introduction:

The history of the children's rights movement is one not simply about protecting the wellbeing of children. Many women and men took part in the movement who represented different interests and of course their work took different trajectories. Historians studying the development of this movement at the international level note how from the perspective of unions, ending child labor was both a concern for the safety of children in factories, but a strategic move designed to increase their leveraging power against employers (Trattner, 1970). Politicians in the United States and other Western nations believed that removing children from the workforce and incorporating them into public education would make democratic societies stronger and create a more active and engaged citizenry (Holzscheiter, 2000). At the same time, seeing children as children entailed for toy manufacturers, vendors of entertainment, and other folks a new market for goods and services (Trattner, 1970).). It is estimated by some business researchers that in some Europe countries and the United States products, television shows, movies, and other goods and services marketed to "children" are worth more than 40 billion dollars annually (Packaged Facts, 2000). In thinking about the recent origin and development of international advocacy work against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), what we see is something similar. Activists, lawyers, politicians and concerned citizens from a

range of different political and ideological positions are working together for the common cause of combating and ending CSEC.

While I am primarily concerned with Mexico, talking about Mexico's own work against CSEC cannot be separated from the international work that is and has taken place. Mexican advocates have been on the front lines in a number of international contexts helping to develop through their own experience with CSEC, the protocols, conventions, and policies of governments, NGOs, and IGOs. Mexican activists were present during each World Conferences Against CSEC, in the discussions related to the 1999 development of ILO Convention 182 (Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour), and in hemispheric and regional discussions on the elimination of CSEC held by NGOs like ECPAT and Save the Children. Additionally, the work at the international level has been reincorporated and developed by Mexican activists at the domestic level as well, resulting in a diversity of understandings and approaches to combating CSEC.

While on an international level, CSEC has been framed within three paradigms, as a threat to security, as a structural result, and as a cultural and social phenomenon; Mexican organizations have appropriated these paradigms in unique ways. Organizations with strong faith based affiliations, like Casa de Luz view CSEC at one level as a security issue---as the result of a lack of law enforcement and effective prosecution, but also as a social and cultural problem reflecting the absence of strong values and faith among those who participate in organized crime in Mexico. Among secular groups, these three paradigms are often blended. For Comunidades Unidas, the problem as at all three levels an issue of security, a deeper political problem about poverty and corruptions, but also a social and cultural problem related to the way children and women are perceived in Mexican society. Borrowing from the analysis in the previous chapter,

about the unknown aspects of CSEC, the divergent perspectives created by Mexican organizations emerges out of the ability to project into the problem of CSEC a larger analysis about the larger problems that affect Mexico.

The aim of this chapter is to construct an account of this history, tying together the perspectives of advocates regarding CSEC that I interviewed during my field research in Mexico, while paying special attention to the significance of these different accounts. What became clear as I interviewed activists working against CSEC in Mexico is that despite being united on the same issue, important differences emerged between organizations—differences I believe have social as well as political implications.

While the international movement against CSEC has nearly 30 years of organizing behind it, much of the groundbreaking and noted work has only occurred in the past 10 years (Mukasey, Daley, and Hagy, 2007). In Latin America, especially Mexico, advocacy around this issue is relatively new. Of the organizations I spoke with, only one had directed attention to the issue of CSEC before 2000 and most others were still in the nascent stages of organizing. Yet, many activists affirmed a belief that despite attention to this issue being recent, their organizations continue to expand yearly. Thus, in directing attention to what is essentially the beginning stages of a growing movement, I believe this chapter will help us understand the basis and direction of the strategies organizations aim to employ in order to combat CSEC. In addition, as organizations compete with one another for resources, space, and attention from governments, foundations, and IGOs, their success and failure at securing funds and support offers us insight into the way CSEC is being handled at the level of national and international policy.

Aside from its own value as an important history to document, tracing the initial work of organizations working against CSEC is important for a number of reasons. First, in looking at the

differences between organizations, advocates, policy makers, and researchers can more successfully anticipate upcoming challenges and address these challenges through a critical reworking of organizational goals, strategy, and focus. In addition, what will be examined in this chapter is the fact that certain perspectives on CSEC remain marginalized both in public discourse as well as in their access to government, foundation, and IGO support. Giving voice to these perspectives and illustrating their insight and particular critiques of mainstream approaches to CSEC, I believe, can be helpful for expanding and strengthening the response presently being endorsed and employed to fight against CSEC. Finally, this research is important as it illustrates a larger phenomenon taking place in many contexts in the Americas, what Feldman terms "securocratic wars" (Feldman, 2004). "Securocratic wars" as a concept emphasizes "the new strategies for the reproduction of American state sovereignty" in which new wars are created that are not "focused on territorial conquest, or on an easily locatable or identifiable enemy with its own respective goals of territorial appropriation. Rather, they are focused on countering imputed territorial contamination and transgression 'terrorist', demographic and biological infiltration" (Feldman 2004, 4). CSEC, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and other illicit and illegal activities taking place in Latin America, which have resulted in a large and militarized responses that emphasize law and order and downplay the significance of social and economic development. As it stands now, CSEC organizing seems a part of this process, yet as I see it, activists and advocates are developing their understanding of the problem differently. While some are embracing portions of the security mindset, there exists a push by civil society to broaden the discussion and insist on specific and varied kinds of responses to CSEC.

In organizing this chapter, I first start by providing a brief and contextualized history of the work undertaken to combat CSEC at the international level. From there, I move into a

discussion of Mexican civil society, tracing the relational history of the work of organizations fighting against CSEC in Mexico. By relational, I mean the kinds of inter-institutional relationships organizations developed during their initial stages of organizing that focused around their paralleled experience with both the law and the international community—or more specifically, the international funding agencies. It is here where I suggest a strong relationship between the law that is produced at the international level and a particular discursive-material relationship between that law and the kinds of funding offered to advocacy and activist groups fighting against CSEC. In developing this history, my aim is to highlight how both discourse and funding work together in civil society (at least in this context) to produce politicized understandings of CSEC that exclude alternative perspectives to the issue. Next, I trace the way civil society in Mexico has both embraced this model, yet at the same time acted against it, finding ways to confront the structural obstacles posed by the "non-profit industrial complex" to critically reflect and act on some of the concerns raised in this thesis. To construct this argument, I look to the work of the newly formed Anti-Trafficking Network in Mexico an organizational body illustrative of this trend. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a review of the findings here as well as some reflection on their meanings for future organizing efforts against CSEC in Mexico.

The Context of International Advocacy against CSEC

Organizing around the issue of CSEC has developed over the past 30 years at the international level as advocates in a variety of circles began to address this issue. Following the common narrative, serious efforts to address CSEC began at the end of 1980s, culminating in 1989 with the UN adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Karene, 2003). In 1990

End Child Prostitution in Asia Tourism was started, working initially to address the problem of CSEC in Thailand, but moving internationally to work with activists around the world to bring international attention to the issue (Karene, 2003). Altogether, this work contributed to a growing number of activists placing pressure on governments and IGOs to address more effectively CSEC, it also resulted in 1996 with the first World Congress against CSEC (Karene, 2003). As the 1990s came to a close, international efforts pushed even further, resulting in ILO Convention 182, directed against the Worst Forms of Child Exploitation. At the start of the 21st century, the United Nations moved a step further with the Palermo Protocols. In addition to addressing the issue of illegal arms trafficking, the protocols took an active stance against organized crime directed at human trafficking and underground smuggling of persons. For Karene (2003), these efforts removed a level of "taboo" from the problem of CSEC, opening up public discussion of the issue and resulting in a number of national and international responses to the issue.

At the domestic level, a number of nations responded with legal provisions aimed at both addressing the criminal networks exploiters rely on as well as establishing a system to exploiters accountable when overseas[12] called, "extraterritorial legislation" has allowed countries to hold exploiters responsible when they are identified somewhere overseas, thus serving as a valuable deterrent against further exploitation of children (Karene, 2003, 3). At the same time, resources have been directed in developing countries to address some of the social and economic conditions that leave children open to participating in exploitation—that is, economically and physically vulnerable to coercion. These efforts have made serious gains in a number of contexts in reducing CSEC, yet in others they have had mixed results as enforcement efforts have proved inadequate (Hodge and Lietz, 2007). In Mexico it has either been the case at the level of

[12] The United States, the European Union, Japan, Canada, Australia, and several East Asian countries possess a version of these kinds of laws in their national penal codes.

enforcement with police overwhelmed and under trained to deal with CSEC, or at the level of prevention, with resources being misdirected, insufficient, or poorly executed.

At present, international organizing has moved forward with increased international and regional dialogue on the issue. In 2001, the Second World Congress against CSEC took place in Yokohama, Japan and in 2008, the Third World Congress against CSEC commenced in Brazil. At both of these conferences, international advocates addressed the expansion of CSEC in various global contexts as well as thematic issues related to the prevention of CSEC and the enforcement of legal measures against it (Second World Congress Against CSEC, 2001; Third World Congress Against CSEC, 2008). These efforts come together as regional and national advocates in a number of contexts are now moving from international advocacy to encouraging reform at the level of the nation state. Among many of the organizations I spoke with in Mexico, much of their effort was now being directed at developing national capacities and utilizing international funding to protect children and prevent CSEC within Mexico. These organizations are taking advantage of a number of resources available through international foundations, IGOs, and government in the developed world, as well as using and adapting international legal doctrines to confront issues unique to the Mexican context. In the next section, I document this specific history in order to move forward with an assessment of organizing strategies in Mexico and to better trace the various organizing histories that are at work presently.

Mexican Organizing Against CSEC: From International Conversations to National Interventions

I divide this section of the paper into two categories, the law, and the support. Each denotes a particular component of the history told to me about the nature of organizing against

CSEC in Mexico. With respect to the law, this has meant a discursive framework from which to hold the state accountable and to establish certain legal norms for addressing CSEC. As for support, this has meant the creation of resources for civil society actors by the Mexican state, other countries, international foundations, and IGOs. This support has followed the development of the legal frameworks against CSEC, yet as will be illustrated here, is also informed by the law as well. This has meant the creation of certain political discourses around CSEC, which in effect, have excluded some perspectives from support while embracing others.

A. The Law

"They sign everything, but they do nothing," was the common response I was given by informants when asking about the role of international law on CSEC in Mexico.[13] By this, informants were alluding to the reputation of Mexico as an active participant and supporter of international law on paper, but of their reluctance to put into effect the specific guidelines of international law on the ground. For the lawyers, activists, and policy makers who had worked to encourage Mexico to sign the various conventions and protocols on stopping CSEC, the absence of enforcement remained the next stage in their work. Indeed, while many of the professionals at the organizations I spoke with remained angry and frustrated at the contradiction between what the Mexican state said and what the Mexican state did, they were not surprised. In a place where state corruption continues to be characterized as the rule rather than the exception, advocates seemed to understand that implied within the letter of the law was the absence of a guarantee of its enforcement. For one activist I spoke with, he described it this way. "Here in Mexico we accept the corruption, at time I believe, we like it. If you have a problem with the police, with a

[13] Original text in Spanish: "Firman todo pero no hacen nada."

rule, we know that it's not the final word, that there always exists the possibility of negotiating or paying."[14]

Yet, I begin with this story not to downplay the effect of the law or even its importance, but to contrast the lack of trust of the activists I spoke with against the recent history of activism in Mexico that has pushed for legal reform and the adoption of international legal doctrine. As described to me in the various interviews I conducted with organization leaders and in my own research on the development of legal reform in Mexico, the law remains at once a sight of desperately needed intervention as well as a place that cannot be trusted, that remains without guarantees.

In 1990, Mexico became one of the first nations to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since its ratification, Mexico has met three times with the Convention body, with the last meeting having taken place in June of 2006. At the same time, Mexican politicians and leaders in the field of human rights have worked hard to push for adoption of and changes in the legal code that hinder combating the problem of CSEC. This includes attempts to crack down on various forms of trafficking, break up organized crime syndicates that profit from exploitation of children, and take greater strides to hold foreigners in Mexico who exploit children accountable. Yet because of a slew of reasons related to funding and support, these efforts have had limited success.

At the same time, according to the director of one organization I spoke with, this additionally has to do with the Mexican legal system itself. Drawing a contrast between the United States and Mexico he explained how state laws in Mexico are not tied to federal laws, but rather work to delineate a specific juridical space. In this way, most states are responsible for

[14] Original text in Spanish: "Aquí en México aceptamos la corrupción, a veces creo, nos gusta. Si tenemos problema con la policía, con un reglamento, sabemos que no es la última palabra, que siempre existe la posibilidad de negociar o pagar."

their own penal codes and as you move through each state you are subject to different kinds of systems. Federal law on CSEC, at the time of the conversation, applies to officials working under the Mexican Federal Government, those involved in organized crime, if the crime is against a foreigner on Mexican soil, if the crime happens in an embassy, or on a boat in Mexican waters. This informant went on to discuss the ramifications of this with the example of "la Ley de Jalisco," a law that allowed someone convicted of raping a minor (someone under the age of 18 years) to be released from punishment if that person proposed marriage to the victim. [15] Passed in Jalisco and later repealed, the law served as a reminder for the informant of the institutionalization of patriarchy of Mexico. As the director astutely points out in our interview,

> So, it's not as though we're talking a state without contact with the rest of reality, it's Jalisco, the third most important state in Mexico. Thus, state laws are very, very out of sync with international law, although federal law is in agreement with international law, but it's not applicable.[16]

With a great deal of power given to local areas to determine what constitutes a crime and the extent to which someone can be punished for said crime, local authorities similarly have discretion to ignore, and thus facilitate the crime itself. This situation provides a dramatic incentive for corruption as there is no oversight on the practices state, cities, and local municipalities take to enforce the law and prevent crime. Thus, while CSEC is a grave issue, its relative size compared to other public safety concerns means that democratic checks, such as a

[15] For a list of this and other ways Mexican law undermined prosecution of rape, see here Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. http://www.catwinternational.org/factbook/Mexico.php
Additionally, it should be noted at that the Ley de Jalisco was unique to the state of Jalisco. However, similarly sexist laws have been documented in other state and local legal codes. The law was eliminated from the penal code in 1991.

[16] Original text in Spanish: "Entonces, no estamos hablando de un Estado perdido, sin contacto con la realidad, es Jalisco, tercer estado más importante de México. Entonces las leyes estatales están muy muy desfasadas de la legislación internacional aunque las leyes federales están muy de acuerdo con las leyes internacionales pero no son aplicadas."

mobilized constituency during an election season, do not apply here. Thus, for all those I spoke with, legal reform in Mexico was about making sure international conventions against CSEC applied to the state and local levels and was accompanied by support for enforcement.

In lieu of these difficulties, however, the law's capacity to shape the way people thought of and understood the problem of CSEC is without a doubt its most important contribution to the work of activists and advocates. As mentioned before, it is not as though CSEC has suddenly begun in Mexico, but rather is has been the emphasis on attention and responsiveness to the problem over the past 15 years that is new. While this is characteristic of a growing concern for some the new ways in which CSEC is now occurring, efforts to monitor and understand the problem have moved from the international arena into local areas. For organizations working in Mexico, much of their organizing did not begin until both the state and the international community began investing significant resources to better understand the problem. As the Programs Coordinator for one organization I spoke with noted, their organization began as an offshoot from an investigative report produced in 2006 by the Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal (CDHDF, 2006). Of course, the report itself might be seen as an offshoot from the growing section of human rights discourse presently concerned with sexual violence and protection from sexual exploitation. While on their own, such norms and legal codes do not translate into policy (that is of course a more complex path related to politics), for the organizations I spoke with, they provided the discourse and understanding of the phenomenon needed to begin discussion regarding policy, to hold the state responsible for enforcement, and to counter certain traditions that made the sexual exploitation of a minor permissible in the past and present.

Thus, the law has had several effects in contributing to the organizing strategies and strength of civil society in Mexico. For one, it has created a set of standards from which to approach the problem of CSEC. Most notably, the law has developed a deep concern with forced trafficking and its connection to organized crime. Discursively, this has meant treating the problem of CSEC as one related to a larger concern over crime and personal security—themes that resonate easily for Mexicans. Second, in both ILO Convention 182 and the Palermo Protocols, the law has been constructed to direct attention to the victims of CSEC and ensures their integration into society. This resulted in a set of organizations that seek to attend to victims and approach the problem of CSEC as a phenomenon that hurts and damages people. While true, the effect has been a stronger focus on the immediate victims of the problem and less on the preventative steps needed to put a stop to it. Finally, as Kennedy (1991) reminds us, "the law on its own creates certain limits through its enacting" (6). With regard to CSEC, this translates into a political imagination created by the law that creates incentive for some policies, while an absence of discursive space for others. This is best illustrated through the kinds of support organizations receive by foundations using the law to develop campaigns against CSEC in various contexts—I look at this relationship in the next section.

B. The Support

As communicated to me in the interviews I conducted with organizational leaders, finding and securing support (financial and otherwise) is a constant struggle. Organizations must constantly be on the lookout (and compete with each other) for grants, aid, and other forms of support to maintain their operations and carry out their projects. Except for one organization I spoke with, the rest receive support from a combination of sources that include the Mexican government and

international institutions. These included foreign governments (such as the United States, governments in Europe, and Japan), but also included IGOs such as the United Nations, and non-profit foundations such as the Ford Foundation. In providing support, what became clear to me through my interviews was that such support carried with it a particular kind of understanding of CSEC related to a political understanding of the problem. By this I mean that as money became available for projects, development of education material, and other forms of support, it similarly included certain kinds of restrictions that shaped the positions and perspectives organizations could endorse.

Among those I spoke with, I was provided many examples of what this meant. For one organization, it restricted the work they could do focusing on raising awareness and educating the public. Anything that might entail encouraging political reform not directly associated with CSEC was off the table, and thus meant that the organization was forced to take a very narrow perspective of the problem, even if organizational members felt differently. In a conversation with a program coordinator, I asked whether the organization saw a connection between CSEC and presence of gross levels of poverty in Mexico. I received an affirmative response, and yet when I asked about whether the organization then worked to address and eliminate poverty, especially child poverty, the reply was "no." Money could not be used to take on these larger issues, even if the connection between them and CSEC existed. Money needed to be set aside for certain projects and this shaped in many ways how the organization organized itself. Organizations receiving money needed to already have a project in mind, and thus could not develop long term, progressive strategies for addressing the indirect causes of CSEC. Instead, they were forced to develop narrow and specific initiatives meant to bring visibility to the issue,

educate both officials and everyday people, and push for legal reform that addressed law enforcement's ability to prevent and punish exploitation.

For the two organizations that did not receive support from the state or international bodies, I similarly noticed a level of candor and frustration with both types of institutions. While this could at one level be interpreted as frustration for a lack of access to support, at another level, I read it as representative of the level of freedom organizations feel they have when they do not have to restrict their politics, programming, or perspective. From organizations heavily involved in support from institutional sources to those who received funding from unrestricted donations, the possibilities for different kinds of interpretations of that support remains endless. Some organizations might gain more freedom through foundation support rather than through USAID or Mexican state funding, and without a further look at financial statements and follow up interviews (to track changes in funding over time) it is difficult to provide a specific understanding of what these relationships produce. Yet, from my initial interviews in this project, a spectrum exists related to financial freedom and critical and radical outlooks on preventing and combating CSEC.

In other research on civil society organizations, similar findings have been found (Malhotra, 2000; Smillie, 1994; Cabanas et. al, 2001). As noted in several pieces featured in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* activists describe how funding agencies can play a large role in the trajectory an organization may take (Incite!, 2007). This creates certain limits to how far an organization can push for change, especially if such change compromises certain values, institutions, or politics the funding institution endorse, or if such change might result in the elimination or attack of the funding institution altogether. In my conversations with organization leaders, however, this concern was compounded with the kinds of demands funding agencies

made for the disbursement and support of projects. In one conversation, in which one organization member contrasted their work with "feminist organizations" it was noted how impossible it would be to apply for a grant if your central objective was to "combat machismo"[17] While admitting the goal was important, perhaps even necessary to the long term eradication of CSEC, it could not serve as the central motive, or even the central tenet of the organization. The same was echoed by an organization started through a religious group in the United States, which described the care it took in ensuring its organization matched up with its Christian values and emphasis on spirituality. Another group discussed the ways in which it had to stay true to its donors and how it was only allowed to use some money for maintenance purposes. Others discussed how political advocacy was out of the picture when it came to some sources of money, and yet all groups expressed a degree of discomfort with this system of organizational development.

Such reservations were in part related to a feeling of unease about how competitive organizations had to be with another for resources—an issue I examine later. Another part had to do with how limited the organization could be in their work and how in catering to the demands of foundations, governments, and IGOs they in turn had to adapt, and thus change, their organization. Before moving forward, however, I want to stress that despite the concerns raised by organizations, most informants generally felt like they were living up to their mission statement and that the projects, efforts, and initiatives they undertook were providing effective responses to CSEC. In this way I want to suggest that while the lens I am taking is a critical one, it is not meant to damage the work of the organizations, but to draw attention to what I view as differences between organizations related to their involvement with and receipt of financial resources from governments, foundations, and IGOs.

[17] Original text in Spanish: "organizaciones feministas" and "combatir machismo," respectively.

C. The Law and the Support: Creating Organizational Complicity and Dissent

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the differences created by the inter-institutional relationships between organizations, legal discourse, and funding institutions are subtle and certainly do not work on their own. Organizational dynamics unique to the founding principles, those who work in the organization, their structure, and their particular concerns play important roles in shaping the way an organization sees itself and thinks about its work. Yet, funding and support are important as well, and they help shape and reinforce differences between organizations that invariably shape the kinds of projects, politics, and development organizations undergo. Since most of the groups I spoke with have dedicated a decade or less of time to the issue of CSEC, what I observed reflect the nascent stages of organizing against CSEC in Mexico. In this way, the differences I noticed are telling of how CSEC itself, as a social problem, but as a political one as well, is taking shape and becoming understood by those in civil society. My point, then, is not that such differences are inevitable in any deterministic sense, but rather that the inter-institutional relationships organizations have developed with funding institutions are having effects, effects that should be taken seriously.

Aside from one organization I interviewed (the one organization that did not receive funding from institutional sources), the rest concentrated their efforts on three main issues: attention to victims, creating awareness, and campaigning for legal reform. Though there exist substantial differences between these three kinds of projects, each is related to the other in particular ways that contribute to a general understanding of CSEC constructed by both the legal discourse surrounding the issue and the kind of power civil society organizations possess. As is commonly noted, politics is the art of the possible, and for organizations, this is not solely a material truth, but one that shapes the imagination of the strategies they employ to create change.

This is often determined by the work these organizations undertake, resulting in a cycle in which practice comes to reinforce ideology and ideology reinforces practice---the consequences, of course, being the hackneyed revival of failed policies against CSEC.

Two examples help illustrate this point for the case of Mexico. The first concerns ILO Convention 182, Convention against the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Though the convention begins with an acknowledgement, "that child labour is to a great extent caused by poverty and that the long-term solution lies in sustained economic growth leading to social progress, in particular poverty alleviation and universal education,"[18] the convention itself does not move any further into specifically suggesting how one might achieve these goals. In terms of action, the convention instead provides vague calls for the development of policy to address these issues, with the exception of insisting states, "ensure access to free basic education, and, wherever possible and appropriate, vocational training, for all children removed from the worst forms of child labour,"[19] and that states, "provide the necessary and appropriate direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labour and for their rehabilitation and social integration."[20] Of course, none of the organization I spoke with possessed the resources or capacity to provide compulsory education to all children in Mexico, much less victims of CSEC. At the same time, providing such basic services was beyond the authority of these organizations as well, and centrally the responsibility of the Mexican state. Yet, organizations could attend to victims and indeed received money to do so. Three of the organizations I spoke with reported receiving financial support for attention to victims programs, not only from international institutions, but from the Mexican state as well.

[18] ILO Convention 182. Available here < http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C182>
[19] Ibid. Article 7(2)(d).
[20] Ibid. Article 7(2)(b)

While many organizations saw the need for preventative efforts such as free, public education as necessary, they understood their own limits in offering and campaigning for those services. In this way, by selectively deferring some responsibilities to the state and accepting others, organizations worked within the limits the law presented while simultaneously accepting and embracing those limits as their special role within the fight against CSEC. This became best illustrated when I asked the director of one organization whether she felt it was the responsibility of the state to take care of and deal with the problems that civil society was presently responding to such as child homelessness, poverty, and assisting victims of domestic violence.

> For us, we believe it's not only the responsibility of the state, but rather the responsibility of each person. These are social problems (referring to CSEC), problems that each person must deal with.[21]

Without addressing the neoliberal connotations embedded in the quote, I want to illustrate here the way in which international discourse on CSEC shapes the imaginations of practitioners at the local level. In the case of civil society in Mexico, what we see is an acceptance of some responsibilities, while a denouncement of others. These do not magically appear, but are negotiated by what the law says, how it is interpreted, and to the extent funding is provided to ensure certain provisions of the law are enforced. Thus, operating within this structure creates certain limitations for organizations, but from the perspective of organizations, they are not entirely viewed as limitations---rather as certain niches or certain roles civil society can effectively take on. In the case of the quote above, that role is to fit into a political understanding of society in which civil society becomes the means through which individuals can take responsibility for the social problems they confront. For others it is, "the way it is," the kind of

[21] Original text in Spanish: "Para nosotros, creemos que no es solo la responsabilidad del estado sino que la responsibilidad de cada persona. Estos problemas {referring to CSEC} son problemas sociales, problemas que cada persona tiene que enfrentar."

logic that results from refusing to let structural obstacles stop those organizing in civil society from trying to make a difference. From a parallel perspective, the quote can be read as a reinforcement of civil society's role in society as it construes the relationship between individuals and the social problems created by the actions of some of those individuals. In this way, civil society is imagined as the passive, arguably feminine thread that binds individuals to common cause of social responsibility.[22]

The second example deals with the United Nations Declaration against Transnational Organized Crime, in particular, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children. My discussions with organization leaders in Mexico revealed how important this protocol was in both framing their work and constructing their mission as organizations. Each organization had an understanding of this protocol and saw it as an important step in stopping CSEC, specifically the trafficking of children for sexual purposes. A review of the protocol reveals a similar tendency as ILO Convention 182 in so much as both conventions acknowledge the social and economic concerns that make children vulnerable to CSEC, yet do little in the way of provisions to encourage states to address these issues. Because the protocol is tied to the larger convention against organized crime there is a strong emphasis on encouraging states to take the necessary steps to suppress and punish traffickers. Article 5, dealing with criminalization, and article 9, dealing with prevention, both stress that states, "prevent and combat trafficking in persons,"[23] through adopting legislative measures to criminalize trafficking, punish traffickers, and create education materials to inform individuals of the severity and seriousness of the crime of trafficking. In the rest of the Protocol, several articles

[22] This is, of course, within the predominant logic promulgated by the new left (particularly by folks like John Holloway), who imagine the state as a corrupted entity constantly misusing its power.
[23] Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Article 9 (1)(a). available here < http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/protocoltraffic.htm>

including articles 10, 11, and 12 charge states with equipping law enforcement with the means to effectively enforce border controls, cooperate with other countries, and strengthen security measures for travelers.[24]

Each one of the organization representatives I spoke with emphasized greater law enforcement in Mexico with regard to CSEC. Regardless of politics and means of support, each saw this issue as a necessary step forward in holding exploiters accountable and in protecting children. Yet, only a few made the connection between criminal law enforcement and the need to provide economic and social alternatives for both exploited children and would be exploiters. Of course, among other things, a strong correlation existed between organizations that fully embraced the law enforcement perspective with those that possessed a more balanced approach. Mainly, it related to where their funding came from and even more specifically, to what extent IGOs and foreign governments (mainly the United States) were involved in supporting the organization. Drawing on other research, what is illustrated here is the way the law works together with funding agencies to restrict imagination and contour organizational outlook. This trend is not intentional, not the result of these professionals becoming disinterested in addressing social and economic concerns, but rather the relational response created through the law. The effect produced through this relationship is that some perspectives, those who believe responding to CSEC requires radical economic and social transformations of Mexican society, are marginalized.

Despite these effects, organizations working against CSEC are not simply reacting to changes produced at the international and national level. Many of the gaps between what the law says and how the problem of CSEC is actually produced are being addressed in critical and interesting ways by many of the organizations I spoke with. Thus, the marginalization discussed

[24] Ibid. articles 10, 11, and 12.

above needs special attention. It is perhaps early to know whether this is temporary yet very present as a result of certain structural relationships that are being addressed by the practitioners, activists, and advocates involved in combating and preventing CSEC. In this next section, I move to describe this work, illustrating here how the development of organization techniques can take on interesting and self-reflective roles, especially as organizations respond critically to the issues they face.

An Alternative in the Works: Forging Critical Responses to CSEC

While I have spent much of this chapter attempting to address the invariable limitations the law on CSEC has produced, I use this section to address some of the ways advocates and organizational practitioners have resisted these limitations. Among those combating CSEC, I received information about feminist organizations, labor organizations, and other radical groups who through their politics were addressing the concerns that led to exploitation of children. This included drug use, exploitative social practices, and the position of children, perhaps all marginalized groups in Mexico, as objects rather than subjects. This was further related to an absence of real democracy in Mexico, a cause advanced by dozens of organizations working at the regional and national level to build transparent governance, end corruption, and put into practice the rule of law. At the same time, organizations concerned with migration, forced migration, and the various kinds of exploitation that grew out of these social phenomena, were simultaneously finding ways to address sexual exploitation of women and children. Because of my specific research focus, I avoided seeking out and directly speaking with these organizations, though as they organize in Mexico, I find it important to mention their presence. They are in fact influencing and taking part in the larger civil society picture in Mexico, and while my research

here is focused on a specific group, it is important for the reader to know that the organizations I spoke with do not exist in social or political isolation but in conversation with other groups and other movements that indirectly take on the cause of combating CSEC.

For this section, however, I want to focus on an organizational network I spoke with aimed at combating trafficking in Mexico. Composed of many of the other organizations I spoke with as well as many more concerned with forced trafficking and exploitation, this group represents what I see as an interesting and critical attempt to handle some of the problems discussed above. In my interview with the executive director of the organization, what became clear was the organization's understanding of the limitations touched on in this chapter as well as the necessity to take control of those limitations in order to address the contradictions, shortcomings, and obstacles placed on civil society by the law and funding organizations.

Founded in 2007, the Red Contra la Explotación, began as an initiative on the part of civil society organizations in Mexico to address the issue of *trata*, or trafficking. First designed as a way to bring Mexico's anti-trafficking organizations into conversation, what has developed is a network that aims to connect organizational efforts, thoughts, and perspectives so that resources can be shared and the overall voice of the anti-trafficking movement can be strengthened. Because much of the CSEC phenomenon is tied to forced trafficking networks, many of the organizations that work against CSEC are involved in the network, bring to it one part of the multiple forms of forced trafficking that exist in Mexico. Altogether, this has meant the presence of diverse perspectives on the issue of forced trafficking, resulting in the need to establish solid definitions, perspectives, and politics related to forced trafficking. As explained to me in interview, this was because of the multiple interpretations organizations used to understand the concept of forced trafficking and exploitation—an issue the network aimed to resolve through

dialogue and debate. As the executive director noted when discussing the difference between trafficking and sexual exploitation, "no hay diferencia," elaborating here to say:

> When one makes a difference between sexual exploitation of children and trafficking, there is no distinction. Because trafficking of people is the confiscation through the exchange of resources or money for the benefit of a third party. We're talking about sexual exploitation as the same. It involves the same actors. What happened was that they {organizations} and argued one {definition} with the other.[25]

Thus, the initial priority for the collective was to create a set of agreed upon standards for discussing and organizing against exploitation of children, and to a larger extent, trafficking. This meant taking from the law definitions already in existence, but also informing those definitions with the experience organizations had accumulated while working against various forms of trafficking and exploitation. In practice, this meant understanding CSEC as an exploitative relationship between children and their exploiters, one not dissimilar to labor exploitation, forms of forced prostitution, and forced trafficking of people across state and national borders. It means situations of coercion that involve the threat of violence, but also the use of other coercive techniques such as exploiting drug addition, isolation, and deception. While an official set of agreed upon standards remains in the work, the collective illustrates an innovative and democratic solution to the limitations and obstacles created by the law. In addition, these negotiations of terms through practice demonstrate new kinds of techniques for developing legal guidelines, ones that see definitions as important, yet remain open to

[25] Original text in Spanish: "Cuando se hace la diferencia entre explotación sexual comercial infantil y trata, no hay distinción alguna. Porque la trata de personas es la cosificación a través de intercambio de recursos o el dinero para el beneficio de una tercera persona. Estamos hablando de que la explotación sexual infantil es lo mismo. Tiene los mismos actores. Lo que sucedió fue que entendían y a que argumentaban una con otra."

transparency and change as organizations recognize the shifting ground of working against exploitation of all people.

This kind of organizing does not come without its challenges. Of the nearly 40 organizations that were invited to participate in the collective, 13 remain as part of it. At the same time, moving past a common language into creating practice and addressing policy concerns has revealed the existence of logistical obstacles the collective must confront. When I asked what the next stage in organizing for the collective would be, I was told that things were, "a disaster, and extremely complicated."[26] This was related to the competitive nature of searching for funding and the inability of organizations to put their own concerns aside for the group. Yet, as I see it, these kinds of problems are emblematic of any attempt on the part of divergent groups to come together and work for a common cause. While right now things might appear difficult, I was reassured that it was not without a "solution," not without, "the possibility to arrive at an agreement."[27] This was because many of the organizations were already aware of some of the benefits or working together—their increased voice, their access to higher levels of power, and their ability to mobilize more individuals around their cause—lessons that were learned both during the legal reforms that took place in Mexico in 2008 as well as the planned reforms underway now.

Thus, what I suggest is not that the collective illustrates the solution to many of the problems I outlined in this chapter, but rather that they are working toward solutions, and beginning the hard work needed to engage with and find meaningful answers to the problems civil society faces in Mexico. It is likely with other issues, similar organizations are forming networks which at one end take international law seriously, yet at another retain a level of

[26] Original text in Spanish: "Un desastre y demasiado complicado."
[27] Original text in Spanish: "Solución." "la posibilidad de llegar a un acuerdo."

informed skepticism that will perhaps push the envelope further. From my observations, it is within these spaces where local problems are allowed to play out under the purview of practitioners versed in international law and discourse. The result is an inventiveness that emerges out of experimentation with international law through the practice of dealing with localized problems. Indeed, this is the pathway many social movements take, moving from bottom to top and back to the bottom, molding ideas and practices developed at the local level, codifying these experiences into national, regional, and international law, and then again molding these principles into the unique situations of local contexts. For the collective, this means greater freedom to use funding as organizations see fit, yet at the same time greater capacity building of the state so that the unsustainable systems of funding are eventually eliminated or no longer needed. It means pointing out the relationship between the rule of law and the economic and social inequality that plagues Mexico and undermines justice. Finally, it means maintaining a critical stance against the temptation to rely on law enforcement to handle problems that are more directly related to the consequences of global capital's expansion into Mexico—whether this is against sexual exploitation of children, or against drugs, arms trafficking, and other security threats.

Conclusion: Post-neoliberal Mexico and the new role of civil society

Depending on when one agrees the neoliberal era in Mexico began, we have witnessed anywhere from 15 to 20 years of investment in a set of economic policies that have dramatic effects on Mexican social and political life. The privatization and restructuring that took place in the late 1970s and into the 1990s has worked to heighten inequality in Mexico, reduce job security for millions, and deal serious blows to Mexico's high skill, blue collar industrial sector.

Coupled with the free trade agreements and free trade zones established in the 1980s and 1990s, the Mexican market has become flooded with foreign goods, while the Mexican industries have shifted to light manufacturing in low skill, low pay factories that sit right across the border with the United States (Jud, 1997; OIT, 2003; Cooney, 2001). In addition, changes in Mexican land policy and agriculture have severely destabilized rural Mexico, leading millions to seek jobs in urban centers, tourist centers, and in the United States (Rouse, 1991). This kind of upheaval is not without its social costs—a tragic reality for those familiar with the causes of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Mexico.

Thus, the post-neoliberal Mexico is a Mexico that must deal with and find solutions for the problems created by neoliberal policy. Several things remain distinct about this era, not just the social costs people must struggle with, but the reduced role of the state and the heightened role of civil society in the lives of many Mexicans.[28] This is not without its consequences, especially as national social problems that require the juridical power and political commitment on the part of the government have been deferred to advocates, practitioners, and civil society actors. At the same time, those invested in neoliberalism must find ways to keep intact the neoliberal project—leading to "compensatory policy" that seeks to relieve some of the extreme hardships created by the neoliberal condition. At the same time, others have argued this phase can be characterized by "securatic" wars, or wars taken on by the state against the criminal threats that now operate without immunity in Mexico (Feldman, 2004). Within this context, civil society must work to address a slew of mounting social problems that have both structural roots yet immediately effect on individuals. In terms of CSEC, this has meant utilizing international law to hold the state accountable, taking advantage of resources from international institutions to

[28] This idea is also derived in part from a speech by John Holloway at the 2010 NALACS conference in which he spoke of the "second stage" of neoliberalism in which resource extraction, militarized governance, and the immediacy of social reform all converge and respond to the social consequences of neoliberal reform.

bring attention to and respond to the needs of victims, and then collectively organizing to find solutions to the shortcomings created by both the law and the institutions that reinforce it. At each stage of this process politics is always at the foreground as groups compete to advance their own perspective of both a specific social problem, but also the kind of utopia they envision for Mexico. Ultimately, this relationship is connected to the kinds of discourses organizations use as well as the funding they receive—both issues that at present remain unavoidable.

Yet, civil society organized against CSEC appears to, like other groups, recognize these issues and start the discussions that might find solutions to these problems. More importantly, however, civil society is beginning to draw connections between these issues and from the conversations I had with advocates, is becoming more interested in larger and more dramatic social, political, and economic reform. My prediction is that as the discourse is woven together by civil society, so will the material responses. Scholars documenting the incidences of resistance in Oaxaca in 2009 note that coalitions made between unions, anarchists, communists, indigenous activists, and various other progressive groups demonstrate a dramatic transition in Mexican resistance politics. In the future, it might be that we see a panorama of civil society organizations, including those against CSEC, connecting their respective struggles to larger issues of corruption, absence of rule of law, and economic and social inequality in Mexico.

Conclusion

"Me Despierto Cada Día Positivo":

Final Reflections on CSEC and Mexican Civil Society

Civil society in Mexico organized against CSEC is relatively new, having only really existed for about 10 years. Their work represents some of the beginning stages of a domestic (and international) movement to address a problem that has been at one level been historically ignored, and yet at another, emerges as a disturbing consequences of globalization and neoliberalism. Those working within these groups represent an incredibly dedicated set of Mexican women and men who, as the quote above states, wake up each day positive. Their work is difficult, often frustrating, yet for each person I spoke with, their time and energy is not in vain if some level of change is made. These organizations know better than to give up in the face of incredible odds, knowing well they represent a small portion of a larger section of Mexico making demands for a more democratic, less corrupt, and more equal society. I conclude with these issues in mind.

The aim of this project was to examine civil society organizations operating in Mexico City that advocate against CSEC. In doing so, my aim was to bring attention to a sector of society routinely under analyzed in discussions related to sexual exploitation. What my research reveals, however, is that these groups are working at the front lines of an increasingly important issue, and doing so amidst a number of challenges related both to their context (Mexico City) and their structure (civil society versus the state or private enterprise).

In chapter 1, I teased out some of these issues by examining the successes and limitations of the organizations I interviewed. Drawing from the responses of participants, key issues were identified that provide us with an institutional framework from which to better understand the

unique role played by civil society in Mexico City. Organizational leaders pointed to their work with the state, international governments, and IGOs as illustrations of the successes made in bringing attention to and forming policy against CSEC. Their growth parallels that success made at the regional and international level to mobilize activists as well as the public against CSEC. It represents billions of dollars from public and private donors around the world to help put an end to a problem that continues shock, disgust, and disturb many.

At the same time, these leaders also relayed their frustrations, pointing to several material and conceptual problems that underlie present campaigns against CSEC. For these activists, the biggest issue continued to be money and the fact resources remained scarce given the amount of organizations vying for support. Their complaints, however, were not simply that money was not available to support everyone, but that the current system encouraged competition and pit organizations against one another, even when their goals were often aligned. Many leaders emphasized that the grant writing and managerial aspects of their work ultimately distracted them from their efforts to put programming and policy in place that addressed CSEC. Finally, activists highlighted how much of the money they received carried with it conditions that limited the scope of the work they could undertake. While this meant limitations, it also denoted the relationship between civil society and other social institutions---namely, the dependence of civil society organizations on the generosity of governments, foundations, and IGOs. These leaders noted the instability of this kind of system, but more importantly expressed concern about the power of civil society organizations given this unbalanced relationship.

These concerns run in line with analysis that points to the limitations of civil society within a neoliberal context. Mexico seems to be no exception to the challenges neoliberal economic and political policy creates for civil society actors---namely, in that it produces both a

need for civil society, yet substantive constraints on the work they can perform. It cannot be ignored, however, that the current social, economic, and political conditions remain the precipitating factors behind a lively and active civil society. As neoliberalism closes doors, it opens windows that progressive activists exploit in order to advance their interests within the shaky political terrain of Mexico.

In Chapter 2, I moved my focus onto the motivating factors that convince civil society actors to continue campaigning against CSEC. This developed from the responses I received in interviews among most leaders that CSEC continues to be a growing problem in Mexico, despite the fact the data supporting this belief is outdated. Borrowing from Zizek, I argue that the responses by organizational leaders illustrate what he calls an "unknown known," or the leap of faith made when we feel as though we know something without having the facts to support that belief (2009). For Zizek, it is within this space that ideology is formed; a concept that supports Gould (2010) and O'Connell Davidson's (2005) writings that argue campaigns against sexual exploitation mystify efforts to regulate the sexuality of women. Respondents, however, recognize the problems with the absence of reliable data, and support their beliefs from their practice---where there seems to be no shortage of instances of CSEC. While they admit the need for research on this issue, their perspective challenges the arguments made by Zizek, Gould, and O'Connell Davidson. Leaders recognize the strategic importance of policy makers and the general public believing the problem is getting worse and of serious importance. For them, this seems to be the most effective way in which support can be galvanized and the problem can start to be addressed at a number of levels. This finding suggests that while more research on the effects of ideology need to be undertaken, especially in the realm of civil society, civil society actors strategically negotiate the pitfalls of ideology in very interesting ways.

Finally, in chapter 3, I trace the organizational history and institutional framework of groups working against CSEC in Mexico. Following the international movement against CSEC to the local initiatives begun in Mexico, I argue that civil society groups are in constant flux as changes in context and discourse create effects at the top and the bottom. Using the National Network Against Trafficking as a model for this process, I discuss the way the network has posed exciting discursive interventions into the way we conceive of the concept of trafficking. Refusing to draw substantive distinctions between CSEC, exploitation of women, and labor exploitation, the group is calling for greater coalition building and coordination between groups that previously did not interact. Over time, the result might be a revision of the legal distinctions made between these practices at the international level, and coordination among activists across the globe regarding the exploitative conditions that produce various kinds of dehumanizing practices. Lessons learned from coalition movements in Mexico, such as the uprising in Oaxaca in 2009, but also globally in progressive coalitions like the Occupy Wall Street movement, provide a glimpse at how partnership is producing new and radical accounts of the contemporary condition.

"Me Despierto Cada Día Positivo" is such a positive note, yet, as I learned from these highly motivated professionals, there are many miles to go. This research represents one of several initial attempts to best understand the struggles and limitation of civil society, as well as highlight their successes as it relates to making headway against CSEC. In the problems I note in this research project, I concurrently arrive at important questions, which I encourage future researchers to critically examine. First, more information is needed on CSEC, both quantitative and qualitative. Important survey work is needed to get a current estimation on the prevalence of CSEC in Mexico as well as the qualitative implications of such a number. We need to know the

effect of structural factors on CSEC, primarily the extent to which economic and social factors play a role in increasing the vulnerability of children to exploitation. Yet, with the perspective of organizations in mind, we must ensure that such results do not hurt the need for reform or buttress the present political system—a system that lacks accountability and the rule of law.

Second, in thinking about the limitations of civil society, we must ask about the extent to which civil society can be relied on as a long-term solution to the problems Mexico confronts as a nation. While the people I spoke with have done an excellent job of working towards change, their frustrations at funding and support represent serious problems to the civil society structure. For one, civil society lacks the legitimacy and strength of the state as well as the power to enforce law. Civil society is at one level the result of individuals committed to making difference, and yet at another is the social reaction to a reduced and hollowed out state—to a society that demands more and more that individuals be accountable to their behavior. Critical scholars must continue the discussion of whether civil society represents a new possibility in social reform, or whether it is a moment of political regrouping and a way to mobilize citizens against the neoliberal economic and governance model. As noted in several places in this work, I believe those organized against CSEC in Mexico are starting this conversation from the perspective of trafficking, and that as their work progresses, those answers might be found.

Third, we must question the opposition discursively created between civil society and the state. This research suggests that such a dichotomy does not accurately illustrate the way in which society appears to be working, especially with regard to CSEC. Instead, organizations remain in direct contact with the state, working hard at developing professional relationships and starting innovative projects that aim to make Mexico a better place. There are certainly corrupt members of the state, but there are also those who overwhelmingly work to make Mexico a

better place. In seeing the state as a monolithic, political actor, instead of as a divided and interrelated, complex system of bureaucracies, it might allow us to retreat from the anti-state/pro-state debate, and more towards a transformation of the state model. Civil society offers us some illustrations of how this might work, especially as these strategic partnerships may involve components of the state that remain faithful to the people. Similarly, recognizing the limitations of civil society might better allow us to appreciate the strength of the state, finding the opportunities in both as the starting points for a new political imagination aimed at serious and perhaps radical reform.

Fourth, this project invites us to investigate further the role of structures in the creation of social problems. In part related to the need to know more about CSEC, we must also begin to theorize more about the role of violence in the contemporary neoliberal condition. Others have suggested that the existence of violence might be the result of greater economic and social instability put into effect by neoliberal policy, yet this analysis begs the question why? Why would those in power permit the continuation of violence? Calderón's failed campaign against the drug cartels seems to be a perfect illustration of the glaring contradictions between the perceived dangers of crime and the repercussions created by an escalated war. Namely, since the campaign, more people have become victims of violence than before. At the same time, the Mexican peoples' experience with neoliberal policy also demands that we question the extent to which the present situation can continue. I wonder, how will society respond to greater levels of insecurity brought on by less economic opportunities, but also by the violence created in these new spaces as well? CSEC is just one social problem in which we might be able to think about solutions, and the work of civil society might be the component of society offering us good answers to these questions.

These questions will require further research that is not only interview based, but practice based as well, that is, community based research that is directly involved with these groups. Future researchers must be prepared to move further in their research by actively becoming a part of these movements and engaging in the communities where the answer to these questions will be important. In my brief stay in Mexico, I learn a lot, yet I walked away with more questions than answers—questions that are at one end academic in nature, yet at another about politics. Thus, to conclude this work, I find it terribly important to mention the need for an engaged academic who is both politically minded, yet interested in adapting and reflecting on one's politics through activist research. Those actively engaged in the struggle against CSEC have a lot to offer to researchers, and so, it is our responsibility as scholars to not simply learn from this knowledge, but to give back as well, and to more fully find ourselves in solidarity with the movements we study. In closing this project, I remain motivated to share my research and findings with those I collaborated with in Mexico, either through presenting my research, or sharing it over email and on the phone. Doing so, I believe, will not only begin a dialogue between my research and those I worked with that might better shape the accuracy and effectiveness of my findings, but it will also have the effect of "grounding" my research within the daily experiences of advocates working for change in Mexico City.

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